

IN THE TABLOID

WHAT HOPE FOR CHRISTOPHER REEVE?



INSIDE THE TABLOID

EDUCATION COPING WITH THE SECRET

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LAST OF THE LEE

Fine words for now, but...

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Tony Blair told the new Parliament yesterday that the Queen's Speech showed the Government "doing the job" of governing for the whole nation. But he immediately faces a series of tough decisions such as how

to fund higher education, setting the level of the national minimum wage, and sorting out the millennium celebration mess.

The Prime Minister told a packed Commons, with standing room only for late-comers: "We will not put right the damage of 18 years in 18 days or even 18 months. But in 12

days we have already shown how we can make a difference."

With ministers already dealing with problems inherited from the Conservatives, Mr Blair said he was proud of the Queen's Speech, legislative programme.

"It builds on the hope and optimism that our election has set cours-

ing through the veins of our nation. It shows that change can come."

"It shows this is a government firmly rooted in the centre-ground, in touch with the people, governing with the people, for the people. The people's priorities. The people's government."

The Queen's Speech, which out-

lined the legislative programme to run through to the autumn of next year, included 26 Bills and three White Papers. But a close examination of the day's texts showed that three additional Bills were possible: banning tobacco advertising; breaking up the NHS internal market; and putting an end to foreign donations

for political parties, along with enforced declaration of large donations.

The key theme was spelled out by the Queen, when she said: "My government intends to govern for the benefit of the whole nation."

With the Conservatives sitting on the opposition benches for the first time since 1979, Mr Blair picked up

the banner of the Tory moderates, telling MPs: "We speak as the One Nation party in British politics today."

To anyone who doubts that, they need only look around this House today. They will see Labour MPs from every part of our country. We speak for the whole nation. We will serve the whole nation."



All the Queen's men: Tony Blair and John Major heading toward Parliament yesterday, followed by John Prescott and Michael Heseltine, to hear the Queen's Speech setting out the Government's legislative programme

Photograph: John Voss

Tough choices are looming on student fees

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

The Labour government is prepared to introduce tuition fees for university students, the minister in charge of higher education has told *The Independent*. In her first interview since taking office as Minister for Lifelong Learning, Baroness Blackstone indicated that the Government would not rule out the option, which would hammer the final nail in the coffin of free higher education in Britain.

If adopted, the move would result in an outcry, particularly among middle-class parents. The last time the introduction of tuition fees was attempted, by

Sir Keith Joseph a decade ago, the scale of parental opposition forced Margaret Thatcher to reverse the policy after letters warning of means-tested grants had gone out to parents.

While insisting ministers were not persuaded of the case for charging for teaching, Baroness Blackstone - Master of Birkbeck College, London, until taking office after the election - said the Government might find it "necessary to consider an element [of fees] for tuition", depending on the funding position for higher education. However, she reiterated her firm opposition to top-up fees - extra costs levied by individual universities and

paid up-front by students. Her statement provides the first indication of how the new government plans to approach the highly controversial question of reforming university funding, and represents a change to existing Labour policy.

In the past, the party has opposed any threat to free higher education for full-time first-degree undergraduates, though it is committed to extending their contribution to living costs through loans.

The issue remained largely undebated during the election campaign by tacit all-party agreement as all sides awaited the outcome of a fundamental review of higher education by

a committee led by Sir Ron Dearing. Sir Ron, who met David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education and Employment, last night to report on the review's progress, is certain to take ministers' willingness to countenance fees into account in drawing up his final report, due in July.

Vice-chancellors and principals have already called for an element of student contributions towards teaching costs. At present, courses for Britain's 1 million undergraduates cost between £750 a year for classroom-based courses and £2,800 annually for the clinical elements of medical degrees. Six universities have this year

placed warnings in their prospectuses that they may levy top-up fees for courses starting in September 1998.

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) last night welcomed news that the Government was "considering radical solutions to the challenges facing the higher education sector." The committee's chief executive, Diana Warwick, said: "There is a great opportunity now for the government to take bold action. CVCP believes the realistic solution is a new and fair loans system covering maintenance and a contribution to tuition. Including the contribution to tuition fees is essential if the

education of our students is to be properly resourced into the 21st century."

Many students, including those studying part-time or on postgraduate courses, missed out under the current system because they received no public support for either maintenance costs or tuition fees, she added.

However, the National Union of Students reiterated its opposition to tuition fees, stating its view that, until the Dearing committee's report, there remained "everything to play for."

An early hint that Labour might drop its opposition to fees came in February this year, when Mr Blunkett said in an interview with the *Financial Times*

that he was "prepared to listen" to suggestions of loans for tuition. In its evidence to the Dearing inquiry, the party made clear that in government it would want to resume the expansion of higher education -

currently capped at a level allowing around one in three young people to attend university - and reform the funding system to make growth possible.

Tessa Blackstone profile, Education+

On celebrating the new millennium

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

Britain's main millennium celebration could be moved from London to Birmingham following an urgent Government review of the troubled project.

Sources close to the scheme say that the capital's Greenwich site could lose the main development "because the whole scheme is up in the air... Birmingham could rush in. It could be a full-back position."

The Greenwich project has been in trouble partly because of pre-election doubts about Labour's commitment to it. The site would be dominated by a dome created by Lord Rogers, the prominent architect and a Labour Peer.

Heritage Department ministers must make a quick decision in deciding whether to continue with the original project or order a dramatic change of direction. The review is likely to take four weeks and will raise

fundamental questions about the financing, business plan, the size of the proposed dome and the type of structures that will be built in it.

The position of the exhibition designers, Imagination, is also being reconsidered. The company has been increasingly disenchanted at the lack of progress in the project by Millennium Central, the organisers, to which it has presented a series of designs for the interior of the dome which forms the centrepiece of the exhibition.

Imagination has stopped work on the scheme. A spokeswoman said: "We're standing back from the project. We're separated but not divorced. We are waiting for Millennium Central to make a decision."

However, no decision on designs will be forthcoming until after the review. A spokesman for Millennium Central said there had been no row: "Imagination had a three month contract to put forward designs and

that's what they have done. We do not need to sign any contracts with them now and will not do so until it is necessary."

The review will also question whether more money should be earmarked for regional events to celebrate the millennium, rather than concentrating on London. The overall cost of the exhibition is estimated at \$650m of which £200m will be a grant from lottery funds and a further £200m has been earmarked as contingency, with around £57m going to the regions.

The project needs £195m from the private sector but Millennium Central says no money has yet been firmly committed, although BT and BA have both said they will support the project.

Millennium Central's business plan for the exhibition will be presented to the Millennium Commission, chaired by the Secretary of State for National Heritage, Chris Smith, when it meets on Monday.

Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

A senior businessman offered the chairmanship of the Low Pay Commission has told Labour politicians privately that he wants a minimum wage of little more than £3.

Peter Jarvis, retiring chief executive of brewing group Whitbread, favours a figure which would include bonuses and benefits-in-kind and would amount to around £3.20.

Mr Jarvis also wants to see a minimum wage fixed to reflect regional trends, something Labour has ruled out.

The news will enrage many of the largest unions, which have called for a rate matching half male median earnings, calculated at £4.42.

While many welcomed the establishment of the commission, announced in the Queen's Speech, they were unaware of the figure Mr Jarvis had in mind. Only a recent convert to the

idea of a statutory pay limit, Mr Jarvis is also keen to promote the idea of regional variation - in direct contradiction to the views of Ian McCartney, the sponsoring minister in the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr Jarvis was contacted by the Labour Party in the last week of the election campaign and asked if he would chair the commission. The 55-year-old Bolton mill workers' son and Cambridge graduate, however, had received no further approach since the election, according to an aide.

While intrigued by the possibility of leading the commission, he is keen to see the terms of reference before committing himself. He wants sufficient leeway so that the minimum could apply flexibly.

Announcing Whitbread's profits last November however, Mr Jarvis said that the principle of a "floor" for wages was a good one and that it would not disturb responsible companies.

Mr Jarvis's private views, however, emerged in a confidential memorandum sent by Whitbread to the Labour Party in September 1995. The document opposed the establishment of a minimum based on half male median earnings - then £4.15 - on the grounds that it would cost the leisure industry £167m and lead to substantial job losses. It would cost Whitbread £27m.

The memo also pointed out that basic hourly rates were "anachronistic" because employees were paid through a mixture of profit-related pay, incentive bonuses, free share ownership, staff discounts and company pension schemes.

A spokesman for Whitbread yesterday refused to say what its lowest basic pay was because it was a "starter rate". The paper sent to the Labour Party said that a minimum of £3 would have a "negligible impact" on Whitbread. Up-rated, that would give a figure of £3.20.

And on setting the minimum wage

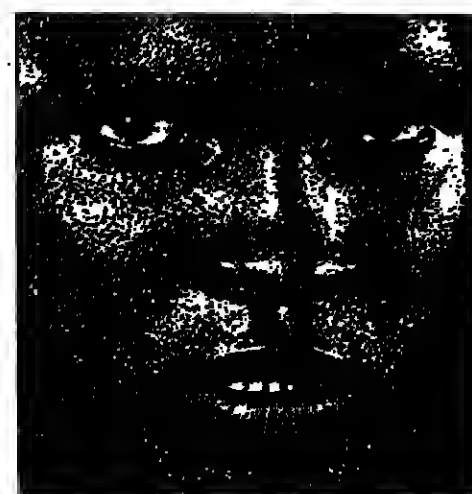
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QUICKLY

Abuse convictions

Three staff of a home for the mentally disabled will be sentenced after being convicted yesterday of abusing residents.

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shorts

Dail dissolution to mark start of Irish poll campaign

John Bruton, the Irish Prime Minister, will today announce the dissolution of the Dail and the start of the general election campaign.

Leaders of the three coalition government parties, Fine Gael, Labour and Democratic Left will meet today to start their campaign with a photocall to announce 21 election commitments. The main opposition, Fianna Fail, will announce its manifesto tomorrow morning. Its campaign will centre on tax cuts of 5 per cent over five years in the higher 48 per cent rate, with some reduction in the lower 26 per cent rate.

Alan Murdoch

Doctor loses C4 libel case

Channel 4 has won a £2m libel battle with a Harley Street doctor who the channel claimed rigged tests and misdiagnosed a terminally ill AIDS patient. Dr Peter Nixon batted his case against the channel's *Praying On Hope* programme, after five weeks at the Royal Courts of Justice in London.

Dr Nixon has gained a high profile for his theory that a list of diseases including AIDS, Gulf War syndrome, ME and premenstrual tension are attributable to hyperventilation.

However Channel 4 found that Dr Nixon rigged his patients' breathing tests by asking them to "breathe as if they were angry". He told Ian Hughes, an AIDS patient who died last summer, that his lungs "were clogged by over-breathing". Dr Nixon, who had a turnover of over £100,000 a year, recommends a course of Valium or diazepam and "two weeks of sleeping" as a cure for hyperventilation.

Paul McCann

Home-made bullet found in jail

A home-made bullet was found in a cell block at a privately-run prison, it was revealed yesterday. It was discovered during a routine search of a prison cell block at Blakenhurst Prison in Redditch, Worcestershire, last Friday. A spokesman for the jail, which is run by United Kingdom Detention Service, said the bullet was made with an empty cartridge.

He added that no gun was found and the bullet may have been made as a "practical joke".

The discovery is the latest embarrassing blow for the jail where hundreds of cell locks had to be changed earlier this year at a cost of tens of thousands of pounds after suspicions that a prisoner had obtained a copy of a key.

Rachel killer's boyfriend arrested



Ian Wells, the boyfriend of Maria Hrauk, the woman jailed for life last year for the murder of teenage student Rachel Leam, was arrested yesterday. He was last night being questioned in connection with "events leading up to and surrounding" the murder in September 1995. Norfolk police said Mr Wells voluntarily attended North Walsham police station this afternoon with his solicitor and he remained in custody there. Eighteen-year-old Ms Leam (pictured) was found stabbed to death in the woods near her Norfolk home. In November last year, Hrauk was convicted of her murder and jailed for life.

20-stone woman refused operation

An operation on a 20-stone woman was cancelled - because she was too fat to be moved - confirmed last night.

Kings Mill Hospital at Sutton in Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, says the 20-stone woman has been refused the operation because she is too heavy to be moved. The woman, who is 42, from nearby Mansfield, has complained to the hospital that she was insulted by the remarks of an anaesthetist, Dr Martin Clark. Dr Clark is currently on holiday and the hospital is in a dispute with him.

A spokeswoman confirmed the complaint had been received and said it was being dealt with "in a confidential and appropriate way". Ms Nicholson has vowed not to return to the hospital for a hysterectomy operation - and has consulted a solicitor about the case.

Coach driver 'hit car at 60mph'

An inexperienced coach driver approached a roundabout at more than 60mph before hitting a car and overturning, causing the deaths of 10 of his passengers, a court was told yesterday.

Philip Crisp, 50, later blamed the crash on sudden total brake failure. But tests and a reconstruction of the accident showed his 42-seater vehicle was being driven too fast, it was alleged.

Mr Crisp, employed by Lewis Brothers, of Aberdare, Mid Glamorgan, was a coach driver who had volunteered to take the coach party on a trip from a council day centre at Aberdare to Stratford-upon-Avon in July 1995. The case continues.

people



Rich reward: Orlando Figes whose award yesterday was his second success in as many months

Historian defies plagiarism claims to win top prize

The young Cambridge historian Orlando Figes triumphed over allegations of plagiarism last night to win a second major book award in two months for his epic account of the Russian Revolution. Figes was awarded the £25,000 NCR award (the wealthiest British prize for a non-fiction book) for *A People's History*, published by Jonathan Cape. It traces the origins of the revolution and its disastrous impact on Russian life up to the death of Lenin in 1924.

Figes has already won the WH Smith award for a gripping narrative that Clive Anderson, chairman of the NCR judging panel, described as a "brilliantly written work". The other shortlisted titles Antonia Fraser's *History of the Gunpowder Plot*, Frank McLynn's *Biography of Carl Gustav Jung* and the bookies' favourite, *Europe: A History* by Norman Davies.

Earlier this year, Figes sued a rival historian, Richard Pipes of Harvard University, after Pipes claimed to have found material taken from his own books in *A People's History*. But the examples quoted by the *Sunday Times* in an article which published Pipes' accusation amounted to little more than some standard interpretations of Russian history and some

trivial similarities in phrasing. Yesterday, Figes' publishers, Jonathan Cape, announced that the legal action has been settled.

The controversy shows that the Russian Revolution and its aftermath can still arouse passionate debate among scholars. Pipes belongs to the cold war of historians whose view of the Soviet past was shaped by the unmasking of Stalin's tyranny in the years after 1956. Figes, although hostile to the Bolshevik one-party state, comes from a younger and less partisan generation. His book pays more attention to the hopes and sufferings of ordinary Russians than to ritual attacks on the crimes of Lenin and Stalin.

Meanwhile, the winner of the book world's richest ever prize was also announced yesterday. In Dublin, the judges of the £100,000 INPAC prize chose *A Heart So White* by Spanish novelist Javier Marías from a shortlist of eight. The prize is open to works of fiction from any country and was first awarded last year.

Born in 1952, Javier Marías is an author and academic whose experiences teaching Spanish at Oxford University inspired his previous novel *All Souls*.

Boyd Tonkin

Agony aunt takes her leave from Liberty

The doyenne of media agony aunts Anna Raeburn has taken a pay cut to leave Mohamed al-Fayed's London radio station Liberty and rejoin her old station Talk Radio.

She has moved because no one used to call her phone-in show at Liberty and she was forced to fill time by playing records and making small talk.

Raeburn (right) joined Liberty's expensive line-up of star broadcasters at the station last December after it was relaunched out of the ashes of failed women's station Vival. She was reported to have been tempted by a £180,000 pay offer. Her salary at Talk Radio is likely to be closer to £100,000.

Since its relaunch Liberty has failed to make any impact on the ratings - in the Rejar ratings published this month Liberty was reaching just 93,000 listeners a week or 1 per cent of the London radio market.

"I was inundated with letters when I left Talk Radio so I am very happy to be coming back," said Ms Raeburn yesterday. "My show was a huge success because of the fantastic audience. I can't wait to get back to them."

Liberty denied reports in February that Raeburn wanted to return



to Talk Radio because she was getting only two or three calls per show at Liberty compared with 8,000 to 9,000 on her old show.

But Ms Raeburn, who is also a star of daytime TV and appears on advice slots on GMTV and This Morning, is known to have been unhappy at having to "spin discs like an ordinary DJ" according to a source.

Ms Raeburn made her name on Capital Radio in the Seventies and Eighties with her own agony phone-in show that was the first of its kind in the UK.

She has lived as turbulent a life as many of her callers, and her trademark is straight, no nonsense advice no matter how weird the problem.

Paul McCann

'Baddest boy in pop' jailed for stun-gun threat

Mark Morrison, 24, the soul singer who earlier this year styled himself the "baddest boy in pop", was jailed yesterday for three months for threatening a police officer with an electric stun gun.

He had admitted possessing the weapon, which gives off a 23,000-volt charge and can cause loss of balance and mental confusion, at his trial at Marylebone Magistrates Court last month. He denied, but was found guilty of threatening the policeman when the officer tried to arrest him outside a 24-hour convenience store in Notting Hill, west London, in October last year.

Morrison, who had a No 1 hit with "Return of the Mack", had argued that he did not know the stun gun was illegal. He said he had bought it in America to protect himself against hassle from members of the public.

Morrison's solicitor told the court: "The bad boy image of pop might go down well in America but as far as Britain and Europe are concerned, it is not the image he wants to cultivate."

Jailing Morrison, the stipendiary magistrate told him that his claims of good character and commitment to charity work had been ruined by "a horrendous record of public order offences".

Jason Bennetto

briefing

HEALTH

High dioxin levels found in breast-fed babies

Young babies who are breast-fed may have as much as 17 times the tolerable level of gender-altering chemicals in their body, a new review has found.

A survey by the independent Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products in the Environment (COT) found that the average levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and dioxins for two month-old breast-fed babies is estimated to be 170 picograms/kg body weight when recommended tolerable intake is 10pg/kg bw. However, Sir Kenneth Calman, the Chief Medical Officer, urged mothers not to be deterred. "Infants who are being breast-fed may exceed the tolerable level set by COT for the short periods of breast-feeding, but would have a negligible impact over a lifetime. The proven advantages of breast-feeding far outweigh any small theoretical risk... On the basis of this information there is no reason to stop breastfeeding; indeed if you stop breast-feeding it is very difficult to start again."

Glenda Cooper

RELIGION

Prince loses church confidence

The Prince of Wales has lost the confidence of churchgoers, according to a new survey.

More than seven out of 10 (76 per cent) readers of *The Church of England Newspaper* said the Prince should not become Supreme Governor of the Anglican Church. The independent weekly paper, with a 25,000 circulation, blames the Prince's admission of adultery and subsequent divorce, and his comments about wishing to become "Defender of Faith" rather than "Defender of the Faith", for his apparent unpopularity.

"Prince Charles's efforts to be seen to play a greater role in the Church of England could be too little, too late," the newspaper says. "While there are many unanswered questions behind that response, there seems little doubt that Prince Charles will be hard put to allay the scepticism and downright opposition to his accession as head of the Church of England."

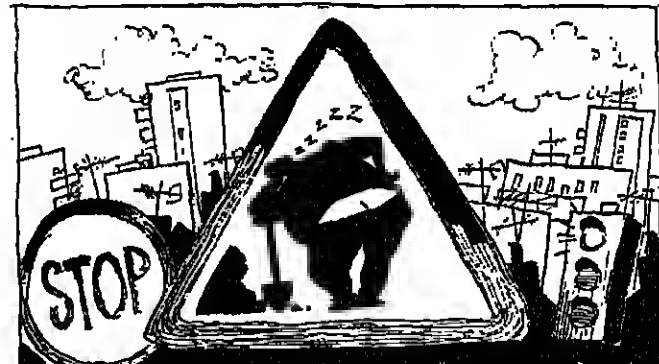
INDUSTRY

Hammering for British builders

British builders are among the least efficient in the western world, according to a researcher who spent two years on building sites logging their performance.

The infamous tea-break is partly to blame, along with late starts, early finishes and incompetent management. Nearly a fifth of working time was wasted through workers swinging the lead, but a further 12 per cent of time was unproductive because of managerial cock-ups. Workers in Sweden, Germany and the US were far more efficient, wasting less than 3 per cent of their working week through late arrivals and early finishing. Amazingly most British building projects are completed on time, on budget, but the Building Services Research and Information Association believes that inefficiency was allowed for in estimates.

Barrie Clement



EDUCATION

Schools starved of technology cash

Schools are not being given enough money to run proper technology courses, according to a report published today.

The average amount spent on each pupil according to the latest figures was £5.86 compared with the £9.30 recommended by the Design and Technology Association. There are big differences between schools with funding ranging from 40p to £21.10 per pupil. Two-thirds of schools do not have the right equipment to teach GCSE courses.

The report, published by the Engineering Council, says that the previous government's policy of funding a few technology colleges and city technology colleges has failed to fulfil its aim of delivering good technology for all. Yet £10m a year would give schools enough money to run technology courses properly. There should also be a rolling programme of capital investment, the report says.

Technology in Secondary Schools, by Alan Smithers and Pamela Robinson, published by the Engineering Council.

Judith Judd

LEISURE

Skiers back on piste in holiday boom

The number of people taking skiing holidays, which went downhill in the mid-1990s, climbed by more than 9 per cent last winter.

A total of 830,000 Britons took to foreign slopes in 1996-97, giving the industry its first major surge for five years, according to figures from ski holiday company Crystal. Tour operators accounted for 475,000 of the holidays - 10 per cent more than in the 1995-96 season - with 205,000 making independent arrangements and 150,000 who went on school trips. France (24.5 per cent of the market) was the top destination, followed by Austria (20.1 per cent) and Italy (19.8 per cent). North America broke through the 10 per cent share figure for the first time.



NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING
Recycled paper made up 41.2% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1996

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Four weddings and a sequel

Hugh Grant to play himself again in a film called Notting Hill

David Lister
Cannes

Hugh Grant is poised to star in a follow-up to *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, the most successful British film ever. The screenplay for the film has been written by the *Four Weddings* creator, Richard Curtis, who is also the writer behind TV comedies *Blackadder* and *Mr Bean*, and one of the key figures behind the charity Comic Relief.

His script, which is nearly ready for shooting, is called *Notting Hill* after the trendy west London area where Curtis and his girlfriend, TV presenter Emma Freud, live in a converted chapel.

Though many people assumed that the Hugh Grant character in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* was a reflection of Grant himself, friends of Richard Curtis realised immediately that many of the personality traits actually belonged to the writer.

It is understood that the new script revolves around a shy young bookseller who meets and falls in love with the most famous actress in the world, and surprises his circle of friends by bringing her along to parties and social gatherings.

Contracts have not yet been signed with Grant, but the deal is understood to be imminent. A Polygram executive said: "The new movie will not have the same character that ended up with Andie McDowell at the end of the last film. But if Hugh Grant plays the character in the new film as we confident-



Hugh Grant with Charlotte Coleman in a scene from the smash-hit film *Four Weddings and a Funeral*

ly hope he will, and with the Richard Curtis script, it will be very much the sequel to *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.

Grant and his girlfriend Liz Hurley were here in Cannes earlier this week. Senior sources at Polygram Films, which owns Working Title, the British production company with made *Four Weddings* and will make the sequel - confirmed here yesterday that Grant has been asked to play the lead.

The bookseller - while again bearing similar character traits to Curtis - will not be the effete bachelor with the tangled love life of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. And while Polygram and Working Title are desperately keen to sign Grant, they will not be approaching the other stars of *Four Weddings* - Andie McDowell, Kristin Scott Thomas or John Hannah. One Polygram source, who has read Curtis' script, described it as "hilarious."

Four Weddings and a Funeral was made for \$5m, and Grant received a relatively small fee while McDowell negotiated a share of the profits. The film went on to take \$250m at the box office worldwide.

It is hoped to start shooting on the film towards the end of the year with a release date next year. With Grant likely to be in the lead role and Curtis writing the script, the film will be seen as the *Four Weddings* sequel and

will command worldwide attention.

The approach to Grant has been kept secret by Polygram and Working Title, who would make no official comment. It was not announced at a lavish publicity luncheon Polygram held in Cannes during the week.

Instead they announced a slate of new films including *Dean*, a feature film version of TV's *Mr Bean* starring Rowan Atkinson, and a new film about Elizabeth I.

Laurie Lee, poet and wanderer, dies at 82



Lee in 1956 while working on *Cider with Rosie*
Photograph: I.Kar/Camera Press

Matthew Grace

Friends of the author and poet Laurie Lee paid tribute to him yesterday after hearing of his death at 82.

His close friend David Tarratt, the pubman of Lee's local pub, the Woolpack Inn in the Gloucestershire village of Slad, said a "blanket of sadness" had descended over the village and it would "never be the same without him".

"He was such an entertaining man who always had time for visitors who came to see him from all over the world," he said.

Lee had been ill since Christmas, having never fully recovered from surgery he underwent last year. He died in his Little Court cottage behind the pub overlooking the village with his wife and daughter by his side.

"It was good that they were with him when he took his last breath," said Mr Tarratt. "He had been very ill and had lost many of his faculties, although his mind was still sharp. His death was not a complete surprise. But it is still a very sad moment. He will be very much missed. He was such an entertaining man, so full of tricks and quips."

Despite his travels in Europe, Slad Valley was Lee's beloved landscape. He was brought up there by his mother and three older half-sisters and attending Slad Village School. He immortalised it in his first autobiography, *Cider With Rosie*, and two years ago he joined a successful campaign to save the valley, renamed Laurie Lee's Valley, from residential development.

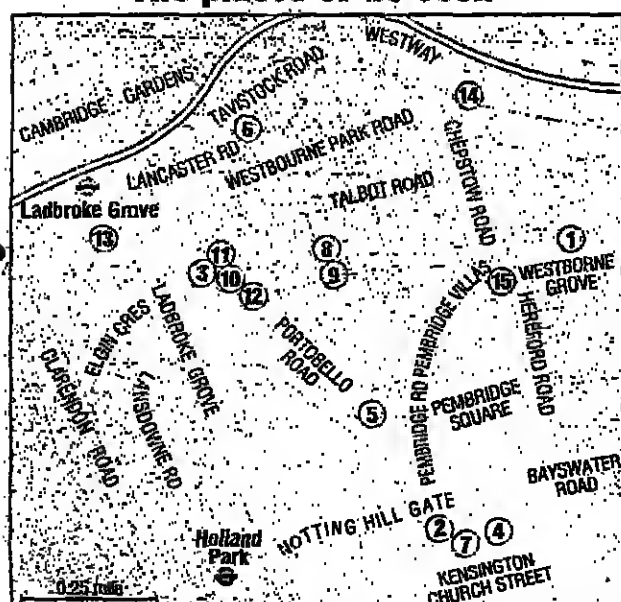
Lee stood out as one of the great writers of this century whose work conjured up a world of earthy warmth and beauty.

Cider With Rosie almost immediately became an established classic piece of literature and was soon part of classroom syllabus work.

Lee also represented an era of brilliance and idealism that sprang from the Thirties - fighting in the Spanish Civil War, writing verse plays for radio and a contemporary of literary figures such as Cyril Connolly, Stephen Spender, John Lehmann, George Orwell and Cecil Day-Lewis.

Among those paying tribute to Lee yesterday was Jack Jones, 83, the former union leader who is now a campaigner for pensioners' rights, and was another volunteer in Spain.

The places to be seen



- 1) Planet Organic - a sample of green food. Sunday morning detox sessions. Sweet green wheatsprouts plus £1.35 a tin. Sean Connery is a regular. Jarvis Cocker, Emily Lloyd, Kylie Minogue and Elizabeth Shue drop in from time to time.
- 2) The Gate cinema - Promotes new film-makers, also shows many short movies. Film-buffs favourite.
- 3) 192 - A must for media types and Bridget Jones.
- 4) The Good Health Clinic - Homeopathic cures, remedial massages, acupuncture. Julie Christie, Björk, Kylie Minogue, Neneh Cherry.
- 5) Portobello Market - antique shops spill their wares onto the pavement on a Saturday for Portobello Market, a vintage shopper's paradise.
- 6) The Sugar Club - Not a club you have to join, unlike half of Notting Hill, but must book - even MacGonigal was turned away at the door when she arrived without a reservation. Tom Ford, Paul Smith and Mick Jagger go there for "fusion cuisine" (blend of flavours from around the world).
- 7) Kensington Place - media moguls should be heard.
- 8) Tom's Groceries and Provisions - Tom's, as in Tom Conran, is the local convenience store for numerous celebs including Rufus Ozbek, Jason Donovan and Elvis Costello.
- 9) Public lavatory - (photograph below) Britain's chicest, designed by Piers Gough, complete with local's favourite floral, Wilt at heart.
- 10) Harper and Tom's - Florist famous for its ornamental vegetables and frequented by John Cleese and Ruby Wax.
- 11) Graham and Greene - This contemporary furniture, furnishing and clothing shop dominates Eglon Crescent. Regular local customers include Miranda Richardson, Richard E Grant and Alan Rickman.
- 12) Portobello Studios - shared office of Richard Curtis, who wrote *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, Emma Freud, Mariella Frostrop and Sally Brampton.
- 13) Alastair Little - the Cambridge graduate chef opened his second restaurant, last year in what was a greasy spoon.
- 14) The Cow - Sebastian Conran's homage to an Irish bar.
- 15) The Elbow Room - Designer pool-hall on Westbourne Grove.

So what's so special about living in London W11?

Clare Garner

The list of famous Notting Hill names goes on and on - just as the price of properties there goes up and up.

Martin Amis put the West London enclave on the desert map in 1989, with his descriptions of Ladbroke Grove's seedy pubs and crumbling terraces in his novel, *London Fields*.

Now, in the words of Thania Kindersley, a Guinness heiress whose latest novel, *Goodbye, Johnny Thunders*, is set in Nineties Notting Hill: "It's so trendy, I'm surprised they haven't fenced it off and started charging an entry fee."

Well, they almost have. Aromatherapeutic acupuncture at the Good Health Clinic; pesticide-free pesto from Planet Organic; foie gras pancake at Kensington Place; £150 membership of the Cobden Club; and a few trinkets from Graham and Greene. Take your choice. It all racks up.

W11 is a celebrity ghetto. From the Gate (Notting Hill) to the Grove (Ladbroke), the streets are stuffed with household names. Damon Albarn, who says Notting Hill has had a big effect on him after reading *London Fields*, lives there with his girlfriend, Justine Frischmann, singer with the group, Elastica.

Taking up the slack where Sloane Rangers left off, the inhabitants have been variously labelled "Portobello Princesses", "Notting Hillbillies" and "Trustafarians" who meet Rastafarians, most apparantly at the Carnival.

Landmarks such as the Gate cinema, by Notting Hill Gate tube, and Portobello Market, are long-standing. But the splurge in saazzy residents has seen a corresponding rise in fashionable joints to meet their every need.

The Cobden Club, a kind of Groucho's-goes-West, a refit of

the upstairs of the Cobden Working Men's Club, on Kensal Road, is a late-night watering hole for local members, such as Jade Jagger, Honor Fraser, Rifat Ozbek, Malcolm McLaren and Emily Lloyd.

If all the fans of Planet Organic, the area's answer to eco-friendly food, swept the supermarket aisles at the same time, it would be quite a party. Sean Connery, Jarvis Cocker, Emily Lloyd, Kylie Minogue, Jason Donovan, Ruby Wax, Elizabeth Shue and Terence Stamp are among those who may have been tempted to try the sweet green wheatgrass juice, at £1.35 a tin, as a Sunday morning detox.

Notting Hill is also a haven for people who work - rather than star - in the media. Jonathan Dimbleby, Michael Jackson, Dominic Lawson, Clive Hollick, Jeremy Paxman and Alan Yentob all live there. Richard Curtis, who wrote *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, Emma Freud, Mariella Frostrop and Sally Brampton share an office on the Portobello Road, and Richard Branson's home and offices are on Holland Park Avenue.

It is not the first time that Notting Hill has provided the backdrop to a film. Recently, Jack and Sarah featured shots of Ladbroke Grove, but earlier precedents include: Nicholas Roeg's film, *Performance* (1970) starring Mick Jagger and Anita Pallenberg; *A Hard Day's Night* (1964) with the Beatles; *Absolute Beginners* (1986), the adaptation of Colin MacInnes's novel, starring Patsy Kensit and David Bowie; and *Orley* (1968), with Tom Courtenay.

The peace camp in Hanif Kureishi's *Sunny and Rosie* (1987) is situated under the West Way and the studio in *Blow-Up* (1966), starring Vanessa Redgrave and David Hemmings, can be found on Princesdale Road, off Holland Park Avenue.

JERSEY ROYAL NEW POTATOES

Flavour of the month

SIMPLY THE BEST

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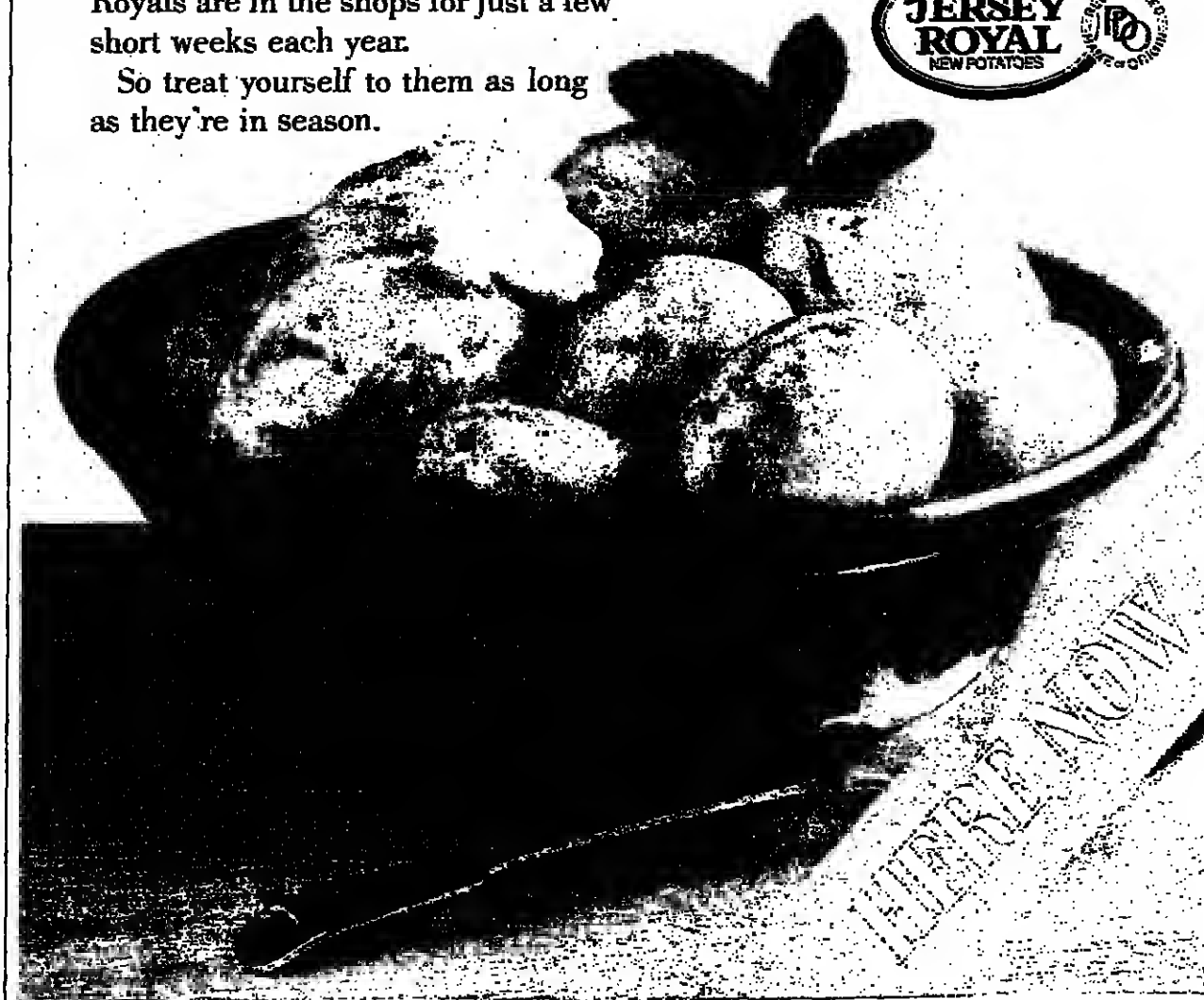
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news

Three convicted after reign of terror at mental home



Guilty: Lorraine Field (top), Desmond Tully and Angela Rowe, and Stoke Place Mansion House, Buckinghamshire, scene of a 'catalogue of abuse, deprivation and torment'

Louise Jury

Three staff of a home for the mentally disabled will be sentenced next month after they were convicted of abusing residents in their care. Desmond Tully, 42, of Exeter, Devon, yesterday joined former colleagues Angela Rowe, a director of the homes, and Lorraine Field in being found guilty of ill-treatment.

Families who had been attending the case at Kingston Crown Court demanded a public inquiry into what happened at Stoke Place Mansion House and Stoke Green House in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire. In particular they want to know why the regime of Rowe and her late husband and fellow director, Gordon, went unchecked for 11 years. And detectives demanded tougher laws to prevent abuse in private residential homes.

Jon Bound, the retired superintendent who investigated the scandal, said details heard in court were "just the tip of the iceberg. New legislation needs to be introduced... to cater for the growth of private-care homes with tighter procedures for their inspection and monitoring, together with guidelines for the employment of trained staff in addition to stringent checks being made on persons requesting registration. Those involved should not be allowed to make vast profits at the expense of other people's misery."

The police investigation into the scandal was launched in 1994 after the *Independent* revealed a secret Buckinghamshire county council report which found residents were subjected "to a catalogue of abuse, deprivation, humiliation and torment." Gordon Rowe committed suicide last year, the day before he was due to be charged with a string of abuse offences including three rapes.

Angela Rowe, 39, of Windsor, Berkshire, was yesterday found guilty of a fourth charge. A count of indecent assault will lie on file. Field, 42, has

been convicted of three ill-treatment counts. A fourth which will remain on file.

Tully yesterday became the third member of staff to be convicted of ill-treatment. He was cleared of two other charges and a fourth will remain on file.

Police found evidence of mental, physical or sexual abuse against at least 40 of the 70 residents, some with mental ages as low as three. Respond, a charity which is counselling some of

them, said they were the most seriously traumatised cases they had seen.

Pauline Hennessey, whose late sister Janet Ward was a resident, said: "At the end of the day, we placed our children in their care because social services recommended that this was a fit place for them to live. What happened?"

But Audrey Bainbridge, who chairs its social services committee, said they were proud of

how they had investigated the home and protected residents' welfare.

Kingston Crown Court heard of a brutal, authoritarian regime. But the true picture, with bullying, manipulative Gordon Rowe in the middle of it, was far more alarming. In one incident, he hosed down a resident who had incontinence problems in the garden. He raped and sexually abused a number of his female

"favourites" and heat and punched other residents.

He terrified staff and let it be known that he was a Mason with friends in useful places. Social services despair that no one reported problems earlier. But Gary Morten, who worked there, said: "You had to be there to understand the power and control that went on."

There were warning signs for the authorities. While Rowe was preparing to open Stoke

Place, police were called in to his former workplace in Somerset to investigate claims that he had sexually abused a resident. No prosecution ensued and lawyers advised Buckinghamshire that they had no grounds to refuse him a care home license. A source in Somerset, however, says there was no prosecution only because the victim was mentally disabled.

There were clues, too, in the homes' record books, which described residents with medical problems left untreated for days and even hints of abuse. Some of the female "favourites" sometimes complained of soreness between the legs. Yet the first alarm was raised only in April 1991, when a local authority passed on a serious-assault allegation against Gordon Rowe.

In October 1993 Thames Valley police investigated other claims but decided there was not enough evidence to prosecute. The Police Complaints Authority is now investigating the police conduct.

Eventually, in November 1993, Buckinghamshire launched its own detailed investigation. Almost immediately, Gordon and Angela Rowe withdrew from management of the homes which were then providing an annual income of more than £200,000 and a lifestyle which included two homes in America. Gordon's son, Nigel, was left in charge. There was no evidence of wrongdoing against him.

Many families felt the licences should have been withdrawn but the council's legal advice ruled against it. Local authorities with residents at the homes were informed in June 1994 and some families received letters. But for others the first they knew of the abuse was when the *Independent* broke the story in September that year. They were appalled. The police investigation was reopened. After an initial interview, Gordon Rowe had a mental breakdown and was never again considered fit for questioning.

Police reopen abuse homes inquiry

The cruelty that thrives on secrecy

How The Independent reported the allegations of abuse in September 1994

How a blind eye was turned to kicks, punches and torments

One former member of staff broke down and cried in the witness box when he recalled how Jacqui Goddard had been treated, writes Louise Jury.

Jacqui is a tiny, partially-blind woman with Down's Syndrome. She was regularly dragged outside and forced to eat her meals on the patio dressed only in scanty indoor clothes, even in the bitter cold.

When her older brother, Bill, found out, he could barely believe it. "You couldn't print what I feel about the Rowes," he says. "When I found out I was heartbroken and I felt utterly guilty. I should have known."

But even social services inspectors were missing the signs. Looking back, there were a few indications that all was not well. Gifts that Mr Goddard bought his sister all disap-

peared. Also, she was on nine different types of drugs - although one is now deemed sufficient to treat a thyroid problem.

It has emerged that Jacqui's own local authority, which placed her at the home, did not send a social worker to check on her for three years.

Lawyers acting for Jacqui, now 50, hope to take legal action against those Bill Goddard believes let the residents down - including the councils.

"I hold them responsible as well as Gordon and Angel Rowe and the rest," he says. "If it's the last thing I ever do, the borough councils are going to pay. I think she deserves something, don't you?"

Like Mr Goddard, Terry and Barbara McCarthy thought they were doing their best by their autistic son, Shaun. They

arranged with social services for him to go into a home when he was 21 to prepare him for life when they were no longer able to care for him.

Shaun, now 37, became one of the "working lads," forced to spend day after day in the garden despite his hatred of it. Gordon Rowe kicked and punched him when he refused to go.

Even now, if Shaun is anywhere near Stoke Place, his body goes rigid in terror. Only when he realises he is not to be sent back can he relax and smile. He has been resettled at another home in Devon, where he is far happier.

There is no chance of that happening for another resident, Janet Ward, who died last year aged 28. Her sister, Pauline Hennessey, believes it was a broken heart after the trauma of being raped by Gordon

Rowe. The medical authorities say it was a seizure.

Janet was a pretty young woman who deteriorated completely at Stoke Place, becoming disruptive and violent and even losing the ability to speak. Only after she left the home did her family discover the appalling regime and that Rowe had been abusing her.

Her aunt June Raybaud said in the last few years of her life, Janet sighed a lot and laughed less. Janet spoke often of the impending court case where she would have given evidence. "She was going to tell the judge about the 'naughty people' and then the judge would put them into prison and then all of her friends would be safe." Mrs Raybaud recalls. "Her story always ended the same way - the naughty people went to prison."

'Abuse' homes: video copying gear found

'Abuse and torment' at care homes



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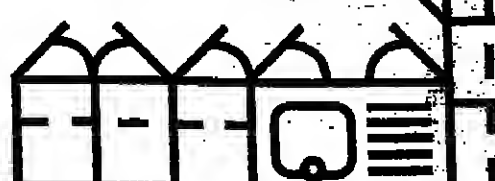
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the queen's speech

Blair aim is a mixture of idealism and realism

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

Tony Blair's government will be radical, modern and "very definitely now Labour," the Prime Minister promised yesterday as he introduced his legislative programme.

But John Major told him: "The road to hell is paved with good intentions."

Mr Blair's government was full of such intentions, the Conservative Party leader said, and the British people would pay the price in higher public spending bills and higher taxes.

Yesterday's clash was the first Commons exchange since Tony Blair and John Major swapped roles, and at times the only change seemed to be the fact that Mr Blair stood at the Government rather than the Opposition despatch-box.

The Prime Minister continued his old habit of attacking the Conservatives' record, while the new Opposition leader continued to warn of the dangers of a Labour government almost as if he were still in office.

Opening the debate, Mr Blair claimed that his government would demonstrate "long-termism" in action.

"This is the ambitious, practical programme of a new Labour government that has its feet on the ground, sound values in its heart and the necessary mixture of idealism and realism which the modern age demands," he told the House of Commons.

"We speak as the one-party party in British politics today. We speak for the whole nation and we will serve the whole nation."

Mr Blair said his party's landslide victory had given it a clear mandate "to modernise what is outdated, to make fair what is unjust, and to do both by the best means available, irrespective of doctrine or dogma, without fear or favour."

The Prime Minister said education remained his first priority. "Building the best-educated and best-skilled nation in the Western world will take time, of course, but at least now we are making a start. I want this government to be long-termism in action," he said.

In Europe, he promised to replace isolationism with leadership, in politics, to clean up public life and in the economy, to replace Conservative "boom and bust" with stability.

Mr Blair said he intended to provide strong leadership and to build on the hope and optimism which the election result had set " coursing through the veins of our nation."

"We will not put right the damage of 18 years in 18 days, or 18 months, but we will start as we mean to go on - setting the agenda, not having it set for us," he said.

Conservative scares over what could happen under a Labour government no longer carried any weight, he said.

"People know them to be false. They rejected them in the last election. If Tory MPs have learnt no lessons from the last election defeat, they had better prepare themselves for the next one," he said.

The minimum wage would help to underpin the system with fairness and the redistribution of lottery money would help to put the Government in touch with the people.

The former prime minister said that Labour had inherited a nation in better shape than it had been for many years, with inflation at its lowest for 50 years, tax at its lowest for 60 years and the lowest interest and mortgage rates for a generation.

Employment was rising, unemployment was falling and standards of health and education were improving, Mr Major said.



"The new government deserves some goodwill and it deserves some luck. I am willing to give it goodwill and for the sake of the country I am prepared to wish it luck. No government has ever come to office with such an inheritance, but it was an inheritance won against daily opposition and obstruction of many of the members now sitting opposite on the government benches," he said.

Labour's plan to abolish the Assisted Places scheme would simply open up new social divides, he claimed.

"The Government don't believe that children from less well-off families should have the opportunity to attend good public schools. Only those children whose parents can

afford it can go. Under new Labour, the size of the wallet matters most in education," he said.

Although he was prepared to work with the Government where its policies reflected those of the Conservatives, Mr Major said that he would oppose many of its Bills vigorously.

On devolution, Labour had not only failed to answer the West Lothian question on how Scottish MPs could vote on English affairs at Westminster, while English MPs could not vote on Scottish affairs. It had also failed to answer "the West Devon, West Hampshire and the West Lancashire question," he said.

Mr Major added: "On devolution the Government have always had the best slogans, but I believe they have

had the worst arguments." The former prime minister also criticised as "profoundly mistaken" the decision by Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to hand interest rate decisions to the Bank of England.

"What he has done is to hand a very important political power to unelected officials, damage his choices as Chancellor of the Exchequer," Mr Major said.

"He has taken a vital choice away from himself, damaged his choices in managing the economy, ensured unemployment will grow and growth will be held back."

Mr Major, in generous mood, praised the Labour left-winger Chris Mullin, MP for Sunderland South, who was selected by his party to second the

speech. Mr Mullin, like, Mr Major, used to live in Brixton.

"He was burgled so regularly that he put a note on his door ... 'I've been robbed so many times that if you find anything of value you're welcome to it,'" Mr Major said.

He added: "I know how he feels. So far as policy is concerned I nearly put a similar note on the door of the Cabinet Room when I left it," he said.

The Liberal Democrat leader, Paddy Ashdown, said his party would play a role of "constructive opposition" in the new Parliament.

"Of course we shall criticise the Government where we believe they are wrong - and especially where their actions fall short of the programme of reform the country needs," he said.

DAVID
Aaronovitch

Clanking spirits condemned to a tropical garden

It was like colonic irrigation, or a visit from Dyno-rod. You had no idea how much crud had accreted in the pipes and tubes carrying political debate in this country, until - on 1 May - it was flushed out by the electorate. Many of those uncomfortable and smelly bits of encrustation that had lodged in the S-bends of Parliament had gone, many of them forever. Jacques "Buzz-saw" Arnold; Lady Olga Maitland; Harry "shouter" Greenway and many, many more were carried out on the flow.

All of a sudden there was to be no more preoccupied with the golf-club prejudices of sections of the Conservative Party; we were now permitted to consider abolishing hereditary peerages, establishing Scottish parliaments, what to do about "ordinary" schools, and what would really be in our own best interests in Europe. The drains unblocked, the colon cleansed, we could breathe a little easier - and invite guests round once more.

The colour said it all. Occupying one half of one side of the Chamber was a uniform (though thinning) phalanx of insubstantial grey men in grey suits. This remnant of the party of power sat looking anxious and somehow decayed, like the recently deceased do in films about ghosts. Somehow or other they had died and their spirits were condemned to wander Westminster unshaven, looking for somebody to haunt. But would they be any good at chain-rattling and hideous moaning? They weren't sure.

Equally unhappy, their leadership candidates sat along the front bench, each carefully separated from the other by the ethereal form of a colleague.

The disappearing form of Clarke was saved from rubbing its wraithly bottom with the vague buttocks of Hague, by the intercession of a ghastly Mawhinney, Hague from Howard (his grin set in a terrible rig) by the skeletal Sir George Young; Howard from Lilley by Douglas Hogg; Lilley from Dorrell by Sir Nicholas Lyell. In death, there is no such thing as society; only rags and coffins.

On the other side of the House - as though the aisle were an ocean - it was tropical summer. Women in gaudy colours danced sambas in the packed gangways; their orange, salmon, scarlet, lime and yellow dresses like a collection of fruits and flowers, sprouting up in an almost indecent profusion. Women! And to add to the feeling of erotica, black women! Gay! Young people! Young, gay black women! (Actually, oo.) And twins. The Eagle twins, Maria and Angela (Liverpool Garston and Wallasey respectively) sat beside each other in identical scarlet suits, looking like two overripe, happy strawberries.

On the graveyard side a strange man with glasses, a high voice and an eerily familiar manner got up and tried his hand at a bit of moaning. "Whoooooooo," he groaned quietly. "As I am shall ye be! Ye'll rue the day that ye tampered with the British constitution, did away with assisted places, introduced a windfall tax, or altered any part of the inheritance that I bequeathed ye. Hoooooo!" Behind him the more energetic ghouls clanked a little and whistled through their teeth.

But from the middle of his tropical garden a boyish Prime Minister regarded this visitation with a mixture of sympathy and amusement.

It was like one of those thrillers where the dead uncle has called his assorted nieces and nephews to the family solicitor's, and entertained them from beyond the grave, with injunctions to behave themselves if they are to inherit. Except this nephew listened courteously, and then replied - as if to himself - "but I am alive. And you are dead."

The Bills

Education (Reduction in Class Sizes) Bill: Money raised from cheating out the Assisted-Places Scheme to reduce class sizes. **Education Bill:** To raise school standards; give parents a role on local education authorities; help to finance school repairs; change policies on selection in grammar schools; establish a General Teaching Council; new student loans.

Bank of England Bill: Bank takes control of interest rates; Bill also provides for greater accountability of the Bank. **Competition Bill:** Reforms and strengthens competition law; prohibits anti-competitive deals and abuse of market power.

Statutory Right to Interest on Debts Bill: A new right to claim interest on late payment of commercial debts and a requires large firms to declare how many bills they paid late.

National Minimum Wage Bill: Provides a statutory national minimum wage.

Finance Bill: Enacts the Budget expected next month.

Crime and Disorder Bill: Fast-track punishment for young offenders; replaces repeat cautions with a single final police warning; reverses the burden of proof to defendants in criminal cases involving children aged 10-13; new sentencing powers.

Firearms (Amendment) (No.2) Bill: Extends the ban on private possession of handguns to small-calibre weapons, although the Government will offer a free vote in the Commons.

National Health Service (Private Finance) Bill: Clarifies the power of NHS trusts to enter into contracts with the private sector to build hospitals under the Private Finance Initiative.

National Lottery (Amendment) Bill: Allows Lottery funds to be used to promote education, health and other initiatives.

Local Authority (Capital Receipts) Bill: Aimed at allowing local authorities to use receipts from the sale of council houses for building new homes and renovating old ones.

Referendum (Scotland and Wales) Bill: Authorises referendum on a Scottish parliament and a Welsh assembly.

Scotland Bill: Subject to the result of the referendum, this will establish the Scottish Parliament.

Wales Bill: Also subject to the referendum, this will set up a Welsh Senedd, inheriting the powers of the Welsh Secretary.

European Convention on Human Rights Bill: Allows UK citizens to enforce their rights without having to go to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Data Protection Bill: Applies stronger protection to personal, computerised and manually held records.

Greater London Authority (Referendum) Bill: Referendum for new strategic authority for the London and elected mayor.

Regional Development Agencies Bill: New bodies in the regions to encourage inward investment and small businesses.

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill: Will replace and re-enact provisions to preserve peace and law and order.

Northern Ireland (Parades and Marches) Bill: Transfers decisions on marches from the police to a new Parades Commission.

European Communities (Amendment) Bill: Will be needed after the rolling Intergovernmental Conference on Europe is completed to ratify a new EU Treaty.

Bills promised but not identified in speech

Social Security Bill: Simplifies benefits decision-making and appeals process and introduces new National Insurance measures.

Immigration Appeals (Amendment) Bill: Remedies deficiencies for deporting those who are a threat to national security.

Wireless Telegraphy (Radio Spectrum) Bill: Introduces auctions of radio spectrum, likely to lead to higher charges for mobile phone users and taxi firms.

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Ratification Bill: to ratify the international agreement to end nuclear weapons testing.

Drop in young jobless leads to a new deal

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Some targets move too fast, even for a government that makes it clear it has hit the ground running.

The Labour manifesto pledge to help 250,000 young people unemployed for more than six months "break out of benefit" has evolved into a Queer's Speech promise of a "New Deal" for 250,000 unemployed young people. There are no longer enough of them who have been out of work for as long as six months.

Gordon Brown will have to hurry with his Budget - whose exact date next month still has not been announced - if the promised welfare-to-work package is going to keep up with the unemployment figures. Fresh statistics for April showed the total number claiming unemployment benefit fell by 59,400 to 1.65 million, the lowest for seven years and within a whisker of being the lowest for 17 years.

The speech set out the well-known options for taking the young and long-term unemployed off the dole. For 250,000 under-25s - including the 179,500 who have now been out of work for more than half a year - there will be four possibilities.

These are: a private-sector job with a £60-a-week subsidy to the employer for six months; voluntary-sector work for benefit, plus an extra allowance for up to six months; full-time study on an approved course; or a job with the new Environment Task Force.

In addition, there will be a £75 rebate for employers who take on someone who has been unemployed for more than two years. There were 359,600 people, mainly men between 25 and 49, in this position last month.

The schemes will be funded by proceeds from the windfall levy on privatised utilities to be introduced in the budget, and are expected to cost around £3bn.

Their reaffirmation in the Queen's

Speech was welcomed warmly across a wide spectrum of opinion. Victor Adebawale of Centrepoint, the homelessness charity whose Foyer scheme ministers have praised, said: "Youth unemployment is a national scandal which needs one, but several sophisticated solutions."

Ruth Lea, head of policy at the Institute of Directors, said: "Making people more employable has to be the right way forward for coping with unemployment and poverty." However, she said the Government should focus its efforts on people who had been out of work for more than two years as so many of the others would find jobs anyway.

There were no closes yesterday about any surprise welfare-to-work measures that might be included in the budget. There has been speculation that the Chancellor wants to make an early start on more ambitious plans, such as a new tax credit for the low-paid to improve work incentives.

Jason Bennett

Prospects of a ban on fox-hunting in the near future receded after Labour appeared to distance itself yesterday from taking direct action.

It is understood it will rely on a Private Member's Bill, which are notoriously difficult to get through Parliament, to change the law. However, the Home Office has no current plans to draft and support an anti-fox-hunting Bill for a Labour MP to adopt.

Jack Straw, Home Secretary, asked yesterday whether the Government would introduce a ban, would only repeat Labour's manifesto commitment to give MPs a free vote in the Commons on the issue.

But a Home Office source later made it clear that a ban on fox-hunting was not a priority for the Home Office, and would be left to an MP to bring in. The source said: "We have the next five years to bring in legislation, this is not considered a priority." While there is a clear majority in the

Commons opposed to people with hounds chasing foxes, Private Members' Bills can be easily thwarted by parliamentary procedure.

The development will be greeted with dismay by anti-hunting campaigners and many MPs, who believed that although Labour has never directly pledged to outlaw fox hunts, the so-called sport would be brought to an end with the introduction of a new government.

This belief was reinforced by comments made by Tony Blair that he would vote to ban fox-hunting if Labour won the election.

Shortly before the election Tony Banks, who has since been made Sports Minister, wrote to Mr Blair asking him to sort out "confusion" over the issue following the publication of the party's manifesto amid fears that Labour had watered down their position on fox-hunting.

Mr Banks said at the time: "If it isn't clarified there will be intense anger about this, starting with me."

Fox-hunting ban faces a long wait

the queen's speech

The central economic objectives of my Government are high and stable levels of economic growth and employment, to be achieved by ensuring opportunity for all.

My Government has pledged to mount a fundamental attack upon youth and long-term unemployment...

A new partnership with business will be at the heart of my Government's plans to build a modern and dynamic economy to improve the competitiveness of British industry.

EDUCATION

End of school fees aid to be first priority

Judith Judd
Education Editor

An education Bill abolishing the assisted places scheme will be one of the first pieces of new legislation to reach the statute book.

The scheme, which subsidises independent school fees for less well-off pupils, will be ended before the summer recess and the money saved will be used to help reduce infant class sizes to 30 and under.

David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, decided to introduce the emergency Bill to stop independent schools offering more places for September 1998. A second Bill to be introduced in autumn will concentrate on raising standards and changing school structures.

There will be a series of measures which will give the Government a tighter grip over both schools and local authorities. Testing for five-year-olds, which the Conservatives supported but did not make statutory, will become mandatory.

Ministers will announce today that a new qualification for headteachers, which was to have been voluntary under the Conservatives, will become compulsory.

Local authorities will be required to set targets of achievement. Ministers and civil servants are discussing whether to make school targets statutory as part of their drive to achieve national literacy and numeracy targets announced ear-

lier this week. The Conservatives wanted schools to set their own targets.

Local authorities will be required to publish education development plans and appoint parent representatives. They will also have to set up public/private partnerships to provide nursery education in place of the nursery voucher scheme, which will be scrapped.

Mr Blunkett will take new powers which will allow him to force local authorities to close failing schools and reopen them under new management.

Authorities said they wanted to work with ministers to improve standards but urged the Government to give them more powers to intervene earlier in failing schools. Last night they also asked Mr Blunkett to give them a statutory duty to raise standards. Graham Lane of the Local Government Association said: "You can't run 24,000 schools from the Department for Education."

Ministers want to emphasise they are more interested in raising standards in the classroom than in school structures. But pledges to abolish grant maintained status and to offer schools the choice of becoming foundation, community or aided will be honoured.

The Bill will also make provision for parental ballots on the future admissions policies of the remaining 161 grammar schools.

A General Teaching Council to promote and regulate the teaching profession will be set

up. There will be an enabling clause to allow the Government to reform loans for students in higher education after the Dearing report is published in July.

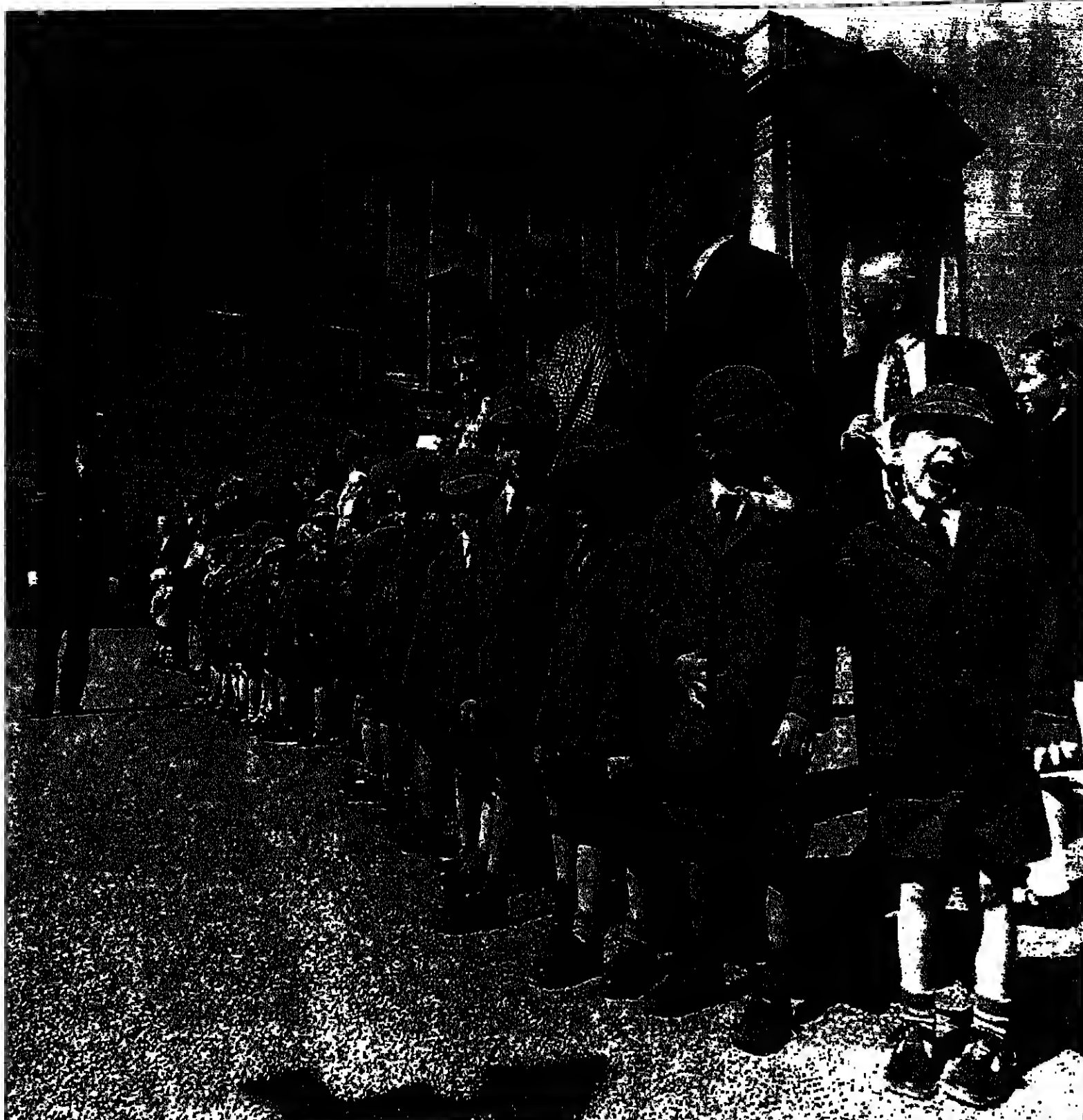
Details of the changes will be published in a White Paper before the end of next month. Mr Blunkett has promised full consultation with both local authorities and grant maintained schools.

David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said that heads would support much of the programme though the absence of extra money was "a glaring omission".

Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, said that redistributing assisted places money would be "virtually impossible with the present rigid formula under local management of schools". He added: "The nearest way forward would be to establish, step by step, a contractual entitlement for teachers not to have to teach classes above 30."

Local authorities, while emphasising that they were delighted with much of the speech, were concerned that the Government should not centralise too much power in Whitehall.

Mr Lane warned ministers not to set targets for authorities and schools nationally. "There would have to be different targets for different authorities and different schools, dependent on their circumstances."



Pupils from Wetherby school waiting at Buckingham Palace yesterday to see the Queen leaving for Westminster. Photograph: Rebecca Naden/PA

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fresh measures swept in to deal with Ulster conflict

David McKittrick
Ireland Correspondent

The Government's plans for Northern Ireland as outlined in the Queen's speech had a decided element of the new broom, promising movement on a range of fronts including the contentious issue of loyalist marching.

But although the marching season is now upon Northern Ireland, the proposed legislation will not be ready until next year. This means arrangements for this year's 3,000-plus parades will continue to be the primary responsibility of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Ms Mowlam, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, appealed to both Unionists and nationalists to do all they could

to avoid a recurrence of what she described as last year's "appalling events". She added: "History will not easily forgive anyone who seeks to bring about such a repetition. I am convinced that the best way of making progress is through dialogue leading to accommodation and agreement at local level. I urge all who are working to achieve accommodation to redouble their efforts."

Ms Mowlam's appeal reflected the widespread apprehension that the marching season could once again bring confrontation to the streets. Although strenuous efforts to reach agreement have been made, there is no guarantee that events such as July's Drumcree march will not once again flare into trouble.

The other mentions of Northern Ireland laid considerably more emphasis on the Anglo-Irish relationship than was the case during the last two years of the Major administration. Official sources said the government was committed to both the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, and to the framework documents published jointly by London and Dublin in February 1995.

This will displace the major Unionist parties, which denounced the framework documents as being far too "green" and have declared they will not use them as a basis for negotiation. Multi-party talks are to resume in Belfast on 3 June, when Unionists can be expected to attempt to prevent the documents being placed on the

agenda. A series of reforms are promised in areas such as provisions for human rights. Northern Ireland's main anti-terrorist legislation is to be overhauled, while there is a commitment to reforms in policing.

Policing in general is to have a programme of reform aimed at increasing public confidence in the RUC, with a review of how appointments are made to the Northern Ireland Police Authority.

The promised incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law will, it is said, have important implications for Northern Ireland. The Government believes that specific rights protections are needed to deal with its unique problems.

HEALTH SERVICE

Go-ahead for first NHS PFI hospital

Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

The first hospitals in the history of the National Health Service to be built with private money will receive the go-ahead.

Plans for the two hospitals, the Norfolk and Norwich in East Anglia and the Dorset and Gravesend in Kent, together worth £300m, were agreed months ago but have been held up because of fears that NHS trusts did not have the legal power to enter deals with the private sector.

A Bill to be published tomorrow will remove this final barrier and is expected to release the logjam of projects awaiting approval under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). A total of 73 schemes, worth a total of £794m, are at various stages of negotiation.

Although the schemes will provide much-needed capital funds for the NHS, after cuts of 17 per cent in the allocation from the Treasury over the past two years, it will give banks and private consortia a bigger say in the running of the service.

The number of beds will be determined by market forces rather than medical need. David Hunter, director of the Nuffield Institute for Health Policy, in Leeds, said:

Plans for a Bill to end the NHS internal market and abolish fundholding have been shelved on the advice of civil servants who have suggested that Labour's objective of reducing bureaucracy and ending "two-tierism" can be achieved without legislation.

A white paper to be published in autumn will set out proposed changes, which will only be followed by a Bill if it is judged necessary.

A Health Department spokesman said: "The view is that you can go a long way, if not all the way, with a white paper and administrative changes. Don't have legislation it."

that you don't need." However, Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, said some changes would be introduced "almost immediately".

Addressing senior staff at the NHS headquarters in Leeds last week, he said the Government would examine the balance of resources devoted to hospital and GP care "to ensure these fully reflect local population needs".

There are fears that this could mean a halt to the transfer of resources from hospital to community care, after Mr Dobson announced a moratorium on further hospital closures in London pending a new review, to be completed by the end of the year.

NHS managers say concentration of hospital services on fewer sites is essential to improve efficiency and release the funds necessary for new developments.

Mr Dobson said measures would also be taken to ensure GP fundholders "do not enjoy unfair financial advantages" and to cut down on the "current paperchase" of forms and invoices in the system.

The Audit Commission found in a recent report that GP fundholders had amassed millions of pounds of unspent savings which health authorities were unable to touch.

One administrative change already being introduced by NHS trusts is the switch from one- to three-year rolling contracts.

Tough targets for a reduction in spending on management will also be set.

Labour has considered establishing common hospital waiting-lists to prevent patients of GP fundholders gaining earlier treatment.

The measure would end two-tierism with the minimum of disruption and cost nothing but a health department spokesman said there were no immediate plans to introduce it.

SHORTS

£5bn housing cash freed

The Government's manifesto promise to tackle homelessness will be addressed in a Bill allowing the phased release of up to £5bn in council house sales receipts. But there is no sign yet of Labour fulfilling its other promise of a new duty on local authorities to protect those who are homeless through no fault of their own or who are in priority need.

Officials described the Local Authority (Capital Receipts) Bill announced yesterday as "the first step towards delivering the Government's commitment to reinvest capital receipts from the sale of council houses in building new homes and renovating old ones". As well as tackling homelessness, ministers see the new programme as a means of providing work in the construction industry. The Conservatives said during the election campaign that the interest raised by the receipts helped to keep down public borrowing. **Fran Abrams**

Bank Governor takes charge

The Bank of England Bill sets out the new framework for monetary policy, after the Chancellor's announcement last week that he was handing over the responsibility for setting interest rates. A new Monetary Policy Committee at the Bank of England will decide the level of rates by majority vote each month, in order to meet the Government's inflation target. Gordon Brown is to set the target in next month's Mansion House speech and subsequently in each Budget.

The new committee will consist of the Governor and his deputy, a second deputy to be announced, two of the Bank's executive directors and four new appointments. It will answer to the Bank's Court of Directors, which will be reformed to incorporate a wider range of interests. The House of Commons Treasury Select Committee will also be able to scrutinise interest rate decisions. **Diane Coyle**

Data protection gets tougher

A new Data Protection Bill will be introduced by the Government to give effect to the 1995 EC Data Protection Directive. It will mean stronger rules and will apply to certain manually held records as well as computerised ones. It will also set rules for processing personal data, including stricter conditions for sensitive material about health, race or religion. An area of likely controversy will be the impact on the media. Labour promises to safeguard its legitimate interests in access to information. **Patricia Wynn Davies**

Radio waves suffer windfall tax

An extra "windfall tax" from minicab companies, and mobile phone and pager networks breaks the link between licence fees and the costs of the radio spectrum used by businesses. A Bill will enable the Government to auction off licences of radio frequencies for set periods in particularly congested areas. The legislation could add 50p a week to the cost of each minicab, and 10p a week to the cost of a mobile phone or pager. It is thought that this move could raise as much as £7bn for the government. **Sam Coates**

Agencies for English regions

Development agencies to promote investment and help small business are to be created as part of Labour's strategy for the English regions. The agencies could be running within two years, starting on 1 April 1999, but there is no commitment to spend any extra money on them as they would be funded by redeploying resources from existing schemes. The new organisations would also coordinate economic development as existing agencies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have done. The Bill is expected in the autumn but there is no sign of the promised regional government assemblies. **Christian Wolmar**

COMPETITIVE PRACTICES

Firms fined for abusing power

Michael Harrison

Companies found guilty of operating cartels or abusing their market power face being fined up to 10 per cent of their turnover under legislation aimed at strengthening competition law.

The Government's legislative programme also contains a Bill giving firms a statutory right to claim interest on late payments – a particular problem for small firms.

However, it appears to have backed away from introducing laws to make it difficult to launch hostile takeover bids. Plans for a root-and-branch reform of competition bodies such as the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and the Office of Fair Trading also appear to have been put on the backburner.

The Competition Bill will have the effect of incorporating articles 85 and 86 of the Treaty of Rome into UK legislation. This will give the director-general of Fair Trading, John Bridgeman, similar powers to

the European Commission's cartel-busting division. He will be able to mount dawn raids on companies suspected of operating price-fixing rings or abusing their power in particular markets. Third parties will also have the right to claim damages.

The legislation will replace the Restrictive Trade Practices Act with a new law prohibiting anti-competitive agreements, providing a stronger deterrent against abuses of market power.

The OFT and business organisations have lobbied long and hard for a reform of competition law and yesterday the Confederation of British Industry welcomed the new measures.

But the new Fair Payment of Commercial Debts Bill has split the business community. Apart from giving firms a statutory right to interest above a given threshold, it will also require large firms to publish their record on late payment and require government departments to pay their bills on time. **Business comment, page 23**

SOCIAL SECURITY

Thirty six century bold on two

Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

The social security framework will be simplified and modernised in order to make it more cost efficient and quicker.

Procedures will be made more simple, the tax/benefit system will be streamlined and new technology brought in to replace the existing system, much of which was set up more than 50 years ago.

The Department of Social Security would not say yesterday exactly what form the changes would take, but it seems likely that it will carry on the emphasis started by Peter Lilley when he was Secretary of State for Social Security. A review of the DSS last October looked for cost-cutting by the Benefits Agency.

Employers will face fines if their employees' National Insurance contributions are not paid – following the regime introduced by the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise to combat tax evasion.

Employers will also be allowed to settle National Insurance liability on minor and irregular payments to employees in a single lump sum as they can for tax.

But consumer groups said that the changes could make it more difficult to appeal against decisions. Janet Allhison, social policy officer for the National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux, said: "There is a shift in the balance which makes the system a lot easier for civil servants to administer but takes away important safeguards."

One suggestion in the consultation document last year had been to hurry up appeals by removing the automatic right to a hearing in person, and if it was heard in person to have only a chairman rather than two lay members as well.

Ms Allhison urged Labour not to hurry through ideas which were thought up when the Conservatives were in power but "stop and think... and put their own stamp on it".

Capital set
elect mayor
and council

My Government will improve the National Health Service, as a service providing care on the basis of need to the whole population.

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Decentralisation is essential to my Government's vision of a modern nation ... In the European Union, my Government will take a leading role.



Onlookers in Central lobby straining to get a view of the Queen yesterday at the State Opening of Parliament

Photograph: John Voos

DEVOLUTION

The Scots and Welsh win their big break

Stephen Goodwin

The people of Scotland and Wales will return to the polling booths in the autumn to vote on whether they want their nations to regain a measure of home rule. "Yes" votes would lead to the first parliament in Edinburgh for almost 300 years, while Wales would get a more nebulous Senedd, its first national assembly since Owain Glyndwr's rising ended in 1406.

Donald Dewar, Secretary of State for Scotland, said yesterday that legislation for the two referendums was being given top priority by the new Labour government. The Referendums (Scotland and Wales) Bill will be published today and its Second Reading is planned for early next week.

Assuming the Bill is passed, voters in Scotland will be asked to say yes or no to two propositions: Do they want a Scottish Parliament, and do they want it to have power to vary income tax by up to 3p in the pound. Voters in Wales will simply be asked if they want a Welsh Senedd. No tax powers are proposed for Wales.

Devolution is likely to be one of the most contentious issues of this parliamentary session, but Tory threats of dogged opposition to home rule have paled in the face of Labour's thundering majority.

Mr Dewar said he was aware that the Tory-dominated House of Lords had been "rattling its sabres" over devolution for Scotland and Wales but he

hoped peers would not block the Bill. "They will be very unwise to hold that up unnecessarily," he warned.

Though Mr Dewar would not set a precise date for the referendums, he hoped they would take place as soon as practicable, probably in early autumn. They could hardly be much later if, as is intended, a Scottish parliament is to be in being in 1999. Unlike Labour's last ill-fated devolution referendum of 1979, a simple majority of votes will carry the day, rather than a majority of those entitled to vote. "Fancy franchises are not on the agenda," Mr Dewar said.

Within the next few weeks a White Paper is to be published outlining the Government's plans for the Edinburgh Parliament so that Scots will know what they are voting on. The 129-member body will be elected by the additional member system and sit in the oval chamber of the Royal High School on Calton Hill for fixed four-year terms.

Alex Salmond, leader of the Scottish National Party, has consistently ducked questions on how the SNP will vote in the referendum, arguing that no decision would be made until publication of the White Paper.

The SNP will try to amend the Referendum Bill to include a question on independence – a move the Government is sure to resist. "Excluding the independence option is a denial of democracy," Mr Salmond said. The Liberal Democrats,

meanwhile, will try and get the tax question dropped altogether. The party regards it as "anathema" as the taxation was an integral part of the Constitutional Convention drawn up by Labour, the Liberal Democrats, trade unions and churches as a blueprint for a Scottish Parliament.

Jim Wallace, leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, said the referendum was unnecessary because the vast majority of Scottish MPs were elected two weeks ago on a devolution platform. "If over the settled will of the Scottish people was made plain, it was then," he said.

The referendum presents a dilemma for Conservatives in Scotland whose former MPs stood on the staunchly anti-home rule policy dictated from Central Office and were wiped out. Pro-devolution Tories believe a parliament in Edinburgh offers an avenue for rebuilding the party and will be arguing for a fresh start at the Scottish Conservative conference in June.

Campaigners for a yes-vote in Scotland will hold a preliminary meeting in the Edinburgh parliament building on Saturday. The new party Partnership for a Parliament group, shunned by Conservatives and Nationalists, has raised £130,000 from unions and the business community in the hope that a single umbrella body can avoid the squabbling that broke out between disparate yes campaigns in 1979.

LONDON

Capital set to elect mayor and council

Randeep Ramesh

London is to get a new authority and an elected mayor to govern the capital, which has been deprived of a voice since Margaret Thatcher abolished the Greater London Council in 1986.

Elections for a mayor and members of the new authority would be held in May 2000. The Government will bring forward a short Bill by the autumn for a London-wide referendum to be held next year.

The referendum's result is unlikely to upset Labour's plans – opinion polls have consistently shown support for the proposal running at more than 70 per cent among the city's four million voters.

John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister, and Nick Raynsford, the Minister for London, plan a Green Paper – to be published in July – which will set out detailed proposals for the role and powers of the mayor and the Greater London Authority.

Labour's manifesto for London made it plain that the newly elected authority for London would be headed sweeping powers over police, transport and the environment.

Led by a directly elected mayor, the new authority would be granted overall strategy in a whole range of areas, including the right to appoint the board which runs London Transport.

Responsibility for the policing of London would be taken by a board answering to the new authority, with a majority of its members drawn from it, although the "national" policing functions of the Metropolitan Police would be safeguarded.

Although the current administration would not appreciate the comparison, the responsibilities of the new bodies would not be much different from the old GLC. Set up in 1965, it was responsible for planning policies, traffic management, roads, London Transport, land usage and the fire brigade.

The difference between the old system and the Labour pro-

posals will be in the power wielded. "The mayor will have the moral power of having been elected. He will be able to stick up for the capital. The GLC was fatally disabled by not having enough power," said Tony Travers, director of the Greater London Group at the London School of Economics.

Nick Raynsford said: "The new body will have an important role for economic development – developing partnerships and attracting new investment, with the mayor leading trade delegations. That is very different from the GLC's function."

Labour ministers were also keen to point out that the elected authorities will not get "bogged down" in the day-to-day delivery of services and said there would be "no conflict of responsibility between boroughs and the mayor's function".

The new set-up is likely to see a mayor elected every four years, with annual elections for a third of the council executive. With a salary of at least £100,000, the personal mandate of several million voters and a worldwide profile, the post of elected mayor for London is sure to attract huge interest from politicians and businessmen.

Tony Banks, the new Minister for Sport, has made it clear he would stand for the position, as would Steven Norris, the former Conservative transport minister – even Richard Branson, the flamboyant chairman of Virgin, has not ruled himself out.

The new authority is likely to span all 32 boroughs, as well as the City of London, which constitute the capital. Academics also believe it would have some tax-raising powers – for example, introducing road tolls.

Borough councils would still have responsibility for "social provisions", including education and social services. Labour ministers will make the point that many services – such as transport and urban regeneration – have lacked a "strategic" vision which will be provided by a city-wide authority.

LAW AND ORDER

Total ban on handguns by summer will outlaw 40,000

Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

All handguns, including the less powerful .22 revolvers, are expected to be banned by the summer, it was disclosed yesterday.

A Firearms Bill is one of a raft of measures proposed by the Government which aims to crack down on youth crime and antisocial behaviour while enhancing citizens' rights.

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, yesterday signalled the Government's determination to overcome any threat by the House of Lords to block a new law to "prohibit the private possession of handguns".

He said that he intended the new Bill to be "short and tight" and to be in place "this side of summer". The new legislation

will outlaw an estimated 40,000 .22 handguns at a cost of at least £12m in compensation. MPs will be given a free vote on the measure – which is bound to be passed by Labour's huge majority.

The ban is expected to come into force at the same time as the Firearms Act, which outlaws large-calibre handguns. Collection of the revolvers could then start in the autumn.

Mr Straw said his department would give "active consideration" to restriction on the possession of shotguns and airguns.

The main law and order measure proposed yesterday was the Crime and Disorder Bill, which will almost certainly be preceded by a White Paper, but is intended to be law by the end of the year.

One of the most controversial

aspects is the creation of a nighttime curfew for children aged 10 and under. On youth justice, the Bill will bring fast-track punishment for persistent young offenders to halve the time from arrest to sentencing.

Other measures include replacing repeat cautions with a single, final warning; scrapping the assumption that children aged 10 to under 14 are incapable of telling wrong from right; giving courts new powers, including imposing "reparation orders" to force children as young as 10 to make amends by working for their victims or the community; and introducing new orders to make parents face up to responsibility for their children's misbehaviour.

On the disorder front, there will be a new "community safety order" to curb antisocial behaviour by nuisance neighbours and new offences of racial harassment and racially-motivated violence. Action against alcohol-related crime, including greater use of bans on street drinking, will be introduced.

On the question of civil rights there are plans for a Bill incorporating the European Convention on Human Rights into domestic legislation; a Data Protection Bill; and an Immigration Bill which will provide for a right of appeal for those threatened with deportation on national security grounds.

Measures to reform the Crown Prosecution Service, such as appointing a chief crown prosecutor in each police force, are to go ahead, but do not need legislation.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Food standards agency shelved

Glenda Cooper
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

The Government yesterday pledged to be "open and transparent" over food safety but did not include plans for immediate legislation for a new food standards agency in the Queen's Speech.

Instead, it will "consult widely" on recommendations for the agency to ensure public health in all matters of food policy.

Last week, Professor Philip James of the Rowett Research Institute in Aberdeen presented the Prime Minister with a report commissioned when Tony Blair was leader of the Opposition. It has gone out for consultation with comments requested by 20 June.

The proposed food agency would be responsible for developing policy, drafting legislation and educating the public. It would report to Parliament through the Department of Health, taking away the re-

sponsibility from the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food. There would be an overarching commission of about 10 members drawn from various backgrounds and an executive arm.

A Cabinet committee chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster David Clark has been established to drive the project forward. But until the agency is established, changes will be introduced in MAFF to improve openness on food safety issues. In particular, more information will be made available to consumers.

Legislation will be introduced as soon as possible, but the Government said it was impossible to say whether that would be during this session of Parliament.

The Consumers' Association said consumers must be given a voice at all levels of the proposed Food Standards Agency. "The agency should not just be made a different way; it should be seen to be made a different way," said a spokeswoman.

CIGARETTE INDUSTRY

Speedy end to tobacco adverts

Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

The Government's plan to ban cigarette advertising as soon as possible has taken the tobacco industry by surprise. Tobacco companies, who spend more than £60m a year on advertising and sponsorship, had been lobbying the Government to phase in a ban over the life of the Parliament.

They had also been hoping that the present voluntary agreement on advertising between themselves and the Government would be used as the basis for the ban because statutory legislation will be harder for any future government to reverse.

The Queen's Speech said a draft bill will be introduced to create "an effective ban on tobacco advertising during this session". There will also be a White Paper in the summer which will look at other means of reducing smoking.

Tessa Jowell, Minister for Public Health, said she was com-

mitted to a ban: "This is an essential first step. But controlling tobacco consumption requires a much wider range of measures if we are to have a real impact."

Ms Jowell will hold a seminar in the summer to examine all methods of cutting the one third of the UK population who smoke.

The legislation for an advertising ban will also consider banning tobacco sponsorship of sport. Sponsorship by tobacco companies is worth around £8m a year.

Clive Turner, spokesman for the Tobacco Manufacturers' Association, said that tobacco companies use sponsorship to "enhance the corporate reputation of tobacco companies and generate goodwill", not to attract new smokers.

Anti-smoking campaigners welcomed the announcement. "The Government is committed to introducing a Bill this parliamentary session to ban tobacco advertising. We're very happy about that," said a British Medical Council spokesman.

SHORTS

Lottery cash spread further

The National Lottery will be handed over to a non-profit-making organisation under legislation announced in the Queen's Speech. The Bill will also allow lottery funds to be used for health and education projects and will set up a National Endowment for Science and the Arts, Nesta, it will devise a new strategy to distribute proceeds.

The Bill will seek a "competitive, efficient not-for-profit operator" to boost the amount of money going towards good causes. The current operator, Camelot, which was awarded a seven-year contract, earned pre-tax profit of £77.5m in its first full year of business last year.

The Government said it planned to publish a White Paper on its proposals for consultation. Fran Abrams

Human rights guaranteed

Citizens will be able to secure the guarantees in the European Convention on Human Rights before United Kingdom courts under the promised Bill to incorporate the convention into British law. A Home Office team has already been put in place to begin drafting the Bill, which will also create a fast-track route to the higher courts for speedy decisions on difficult or controversial issues.

The measure will mean that for the first time since the convention was signed by Council of Europe nations in November 1950, British subjects will be able to enforce their rights in UK courts in the majority of cases instead of going to the European Court of Human Rights.

Crucial questions, however, remain. The key issue is whether British judges would be empowered to strike down a provision in existing law for being in violation of convention rights, as in Canada, or whether the rectification of the breach would have to await an Act of Parliament. Patricia Wynn Davies

Britain to rejoin Unesco

The Overseas Development Administration will publish a White Paper covering all Britain's efforts to help poor countries in the autumn. It will explain how the Government will implement policies to reduce poverty and promote development, "which brings real benefits to the poorest people in the poorest countries".

The Queen's speech also confirmed that Britain will rejoin the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation after quitting 12 years ago when the UK had serious concerns about Unesco's effectiveness. Charities are now anxious to see if cuts in aid made in the last two years will be reversed. Britain spends about 0.3 per cent of its GDP in aid to the developing world – less than half the UN target. Nick Schoon

Immigration appeal body

The Government will move to bring immigration law into line with European rulings if time permits. A Bill would provide a right of appeal for individuals liable to deportation on grounds of national security, setting up a new body with decision-making powers to consider such appeals. Now, a non-British citizen has no appeal where the Home Secretary regards deportation in the public interest based on national security.

Passage of European law eased

A European Communities (Amendment) Bill will enable new legislation from the inter-governmental Conference to be passed through the British Parliament. EU members have to pass laws from the IGC through their legislatures. Some Tories have called for a referendum on the amendments, but with Tony Blair's huge majority there is unlikely to be the trouble John Major had in 1992 getting the Maastricht treaty through Parliament. Sam Coates

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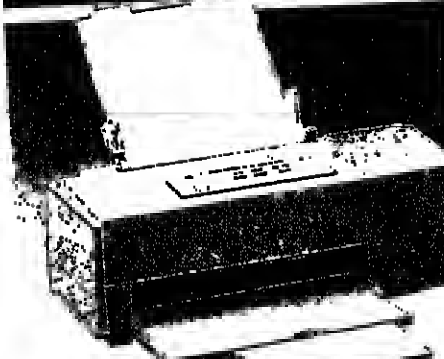
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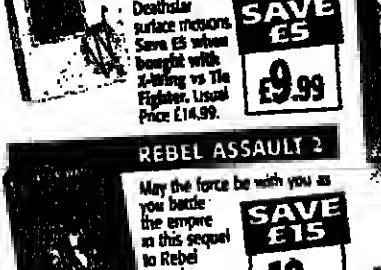
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What price nature? At £20 trillion a year it is truly our most precious asset

Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

What price a wild flower, or lark song, or a view of wooded hills and meadows? Poets might ask the question but biologists and economists have now conspired to come up with an answer.

Package all nature into one global job lot and it's worth £20 trillion a year to humanity. That's almost twice the world's entire gross national product of £11 trillion a year.

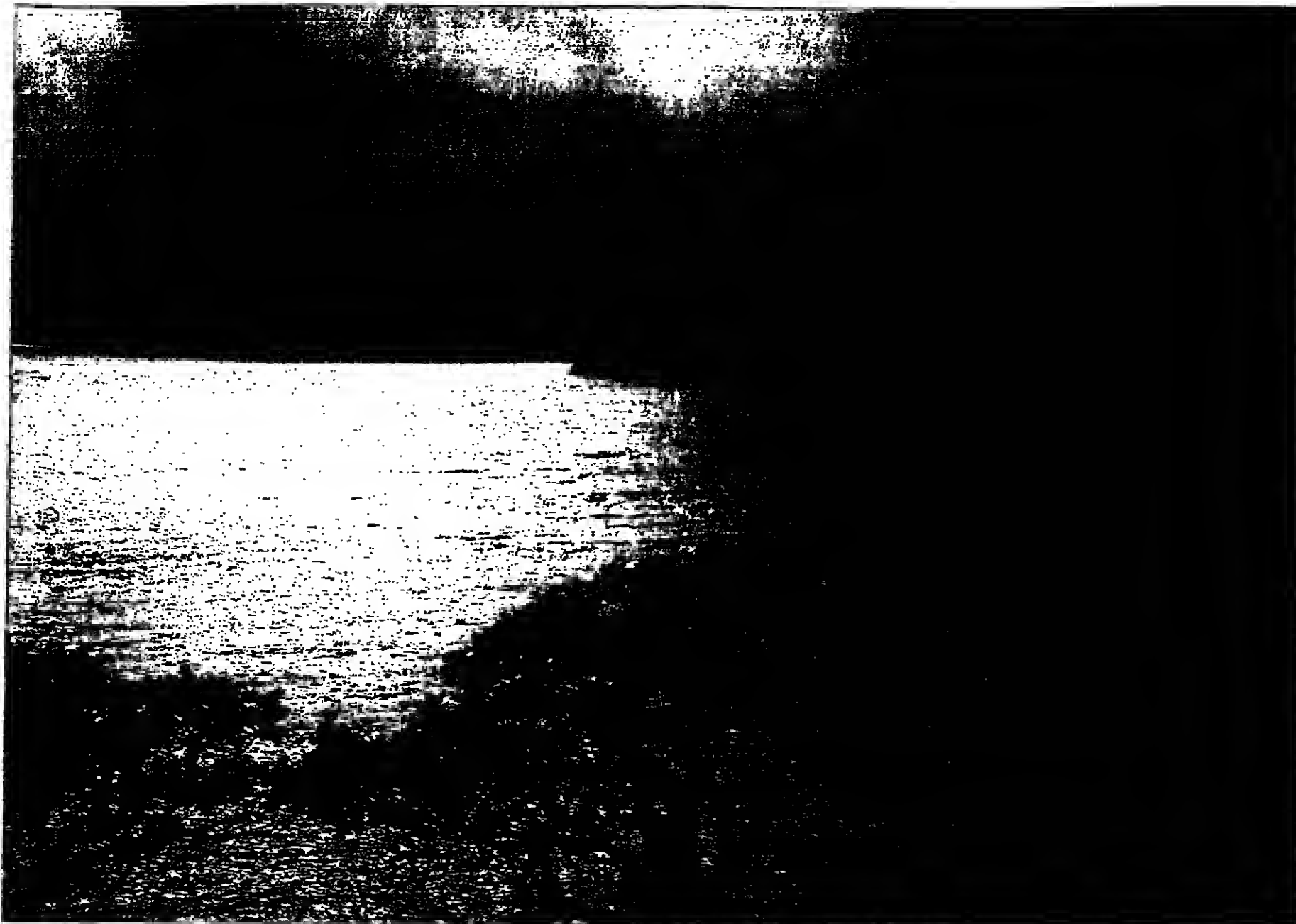
Nature, then, is very big business indeed. We take most of what it does for us, in making life possible and delightful, for granted. But we could not begin to meet the bill if we were made to pay for it.

The estimate, by a group of US, Dutch and Argentinian scientists is published in today's issue of the science journal *Nature*. Much of their work was done during an intensive, one-week workshop at a new National Centre for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

The 13 scientists divided the earth's multitude of habitats into 16 broad categories or "biomes". These included the deep oceans, fish-rich coastal waters, coral reefs, forests and grassland.

For each biome, they estimated what an average hectare was worth in terms of providing 17 different "ecosystem services". These included recreation and culture, food and raw material production, absorbing and recycling man-made wastes, preventing soil erosion and regulating the climate. Cities, ice and rock, desert and sub-arctic tundra were excluded on the grounds that they provided negligible or zero ecosystem services.

Each average hectare of open ocean was estimated to be worth £162 per year, while each hectare of tropical forest came in at £1,216. Most valuable of all were swamps and flood plains worth £11,939 per year – most of that through supplying water and controlling floods. Humanity's croplands, however, provided only £56 per hectare per year, nearly all of that in food production. Add all of this largest up for the entire globe and you get the monstrous £20 trillion which, say the scientists, only gives a "crude, initial



Nature's bounty: Humanity could not begin to meet the bill for the beauty and delight of the Lake District in Cumbria

Photograph: Warwick Sweeney

magnitude" and is almost certainly an underestimate.

But what does it mean? "One way to look at this ... is that if one were to try to replace the services of ecosystems at the current margin,

one would need to increase global gross national product by £20 trillion," they write.

But "this impossible task would lead to no increase in welfare because we would only be replacing existing

services, and it ignores the fact that many ecosystem services are literally irreplaceable".

The details of their methods and sums are far too big for a *Nature* article but a six-page spreadsheet and

18 pages of footnotes are available on the journal's web site, <http://www.nature.com>.

Nature, however, can be extremely costly to humanity too. Another article in the same issue says

the earthquake in Kobe, Japan in January 1995 was the most costly natural disaster in history, doing £79bn worth of damage. It lasted only 20 seconds and killed more than 6,000 people.

Key civil servant criticises Howard

Kim Sengupta and
Ian Burrell

The bitter feud between Michael Howard and Ann Widdecombe took another twist yesterday over the former Home Secretary's seeming public reticence on television to stand by a statement he made to Parliament.

On BBC 2's *Newsnight*, Mr Howard was pressed repeatedly by Jeremy Paxman on whether he had threatened to instruct Mr Lewis to suspend John Marriott, the governor of Parkhurst prison. Despite being asked the same question 14 times, the former Home Secretary refused to answer.

Ms Widdecombe said yesterday: "On *Newsnight* Mr Howard refused repeatedly to deny he had threatened to instruct Mr Lewis in respect of the fate of the governor of Parkhurst. On October 19 1995, Michael Howard made that specific denial to the House of Commons. Why was he so shy of doing that on *Newsnight*?"

"Any MP seriously considering voting for Michael Howard as leader should watch the tape of *Newsnight* and set that side by side with the *Hansard* for October 19, 1995, and should compare the two before casting his or her vote".

Last night Mr Howard's position was further weakened by comments made by Brian Landers, who was finance director of the Prison Service at the time of Mr Lewis's sacking: "Knowing the three people concerned, I know whose words I trust. Ms Widdecombe took the time to understand the real problems in a way Michael Howard did not. His style was adversarial," he said.

In a statement, Mr Howard yesterday denied misleading MPs: "I would like to repeat once more that there is no truth in any allegation that I misled the House of Commons. Had I done so, it would have been the duty of the Home Office officials to point that out so I could correct any inaccuracies. They did not for the simple reason that everything I said was true".

Last night Ms Widdecombe received further backing from her predecessor at the Home Office, Sir Peter Lloyd, who criticised the actions of the former Home Secretary in sacking Derek Lewis.

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Her supporters say her prison conditions are appalling. The truth is a very different story

Captive mother-to-be: Roisin McAliskey, above, and from left, sympathisers George Howarth, Joanne Woodward, Liam Neeson, Natasha Richardson and Bernadette McAliskey

Fein. Martin McGuinness, the Sinn Féin senior strategist, came to London to visit the suspected IRA bomber in prison this week to raise the profile of her case in the international media. He claimed she was being "persecuted" and subjected to "inhuman and degrading" conditions in Holloway prison, north London, where she is awaiting extradition to Germany on charges relating to the mortar bombing of a British Army barracks.

The Independent show that during her confinement, Ms McAliskey will be allowed to be accompanied by two "birthing partners" of her choice, expected to be the father of her child, Sean McCotter, and her mother, the high profile republican, Bernadette McAliskey.

The baby is due on Wednesday and will be delivered at a hospital in London. Ms McAliskey, whose general health is not good, has been seen weekly by an obstetrician, a gynaecologist and a midwife, gets daily visits from a doctor and is allowed to attend ante-natal classes. She can also use the prison swimming pool and gym.

After the birth, she will be allowed to keep her child with her in the prison's mother-and-baby unit, at least until it is nine months old. Papers drawn up by Alan Walker, the prison service head of operations, show that Ms McAliskey has been made a special case.

The level of treatment is unprecedented for a high-security category A prisoner. Senior prison service officials said they "dare not" give their critics ammunition for accusations of unfair treatment. Ms McAliskey has been visited by an almost constant

stream of penal reformers, family members and English, Irish and European politicians.

Among those who have been to see her are George Howarth, the Labour MP who is now a Home Office minister with a responsibility for prisons.

Other high-profile visitors include the Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn, Max Madden, the former Labour MP, and Sean Maloney, the Irish senator.

The McAliskey case threatens to become an international cause célèbre and a propaganda disaster for Britain as the new Labour government aims to champion human rights causes.

In the United States, star-studded events have been held to raise money for her. One gathering at the fashionable La Belle Epoque restaurant in New York a fortnight ago raised £12,000 for the pregnant prisoner.

The Hollywood stars present included Joanne Woodward, the wife of Paul Newman, Ulster-born Liam Neeson and his English wife, Natasha Richardson, and Terry George, the former Irish National Liberation Army terrorist and filmmaker responsible for *In the Name of the Father* and *Some Mother's Son*.

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Boothroyd bars Sinn Féin MPs

Colin Brown and David McKitterick

Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, the newly-elected Sinn Féin MPs, were threatening legal action after being barred from using the Commons by the Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, for refusing to swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen.

The decision was given over-whelming support by MPs on both sides, and was greeted by cheers when it was announced. But there are fears that excluding the two republicans will be used as a propaganda weapon to boost their support.

They are due to turn up at the Commons, probably on Tuesday, to demand entrance and to argue that the decision discriminates against their electors. Republican sources have already made plain their intention to open a London office, either

inside or outside the Commons. Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, later said he wanted to make progress on the Ulster cross-party talks, but he repeated that Sinn Féin would not be admitted unless the IRA declared "an unequivocal ceasefire demonstrated in word and deed."

Mr Blair is due to set out a definitive statement of his policy during a visit to Northern Ireland this week. He said there would be no question of any change to the status of Northern Ireland without the overwhelming consent of the people of the Province.

Martin McGuinness said: "There may be legal avenues we would need to explore. We reserve judgment on all of that until we have the full statement. Mr Adams added: "It isn't the end of the world. Part of the silliness of this is that Sinn Féin is in no way dependent on the facilities, but we do have a right to them."

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Kray brother on trial for £39m drug deal

Kim Sengupta

Charlie Kray, older brother of twins Ronnie and Reggie, was involved in a £39m cocaine deal, a court was told yesterday. Unfortunately for Mr Kray, 70, the "underworld customers" it was alleged he tried to sell the drugs to were in fact undercover police officers who trapped with him taped calls, it was said. Mr Kray presented himself as

an "affable character" who "amused people with tales of the old days and the twins". John Kelsey-Fry, for the prosecution, said at Woolwich Crown Court, in south London. "The Crown, however, alleges that behind the affable image there was another side to the defendant's life. This other side of Charles Kray was a man prepared to be involved in the drugs trade," he said.

The court heard that Mr Kray agreed with two others, Ronald Field and Robert Gould, to supply customers with 5kg of cocaine - which has a street name of "Charlie" - every week for up to two years. Mr Kray and his associate were to receive £31,500 per kilogram. The ultimate street value, once it was split into individual deals, would be something in excess of £150,000 per kilo.

However, the court was told, Mr Kray was keen to distance himself from physically handling the narcotic because of his fame. Mr Kelsey-Fry said: "He made it very clear that he would never do that, being as well known as he was, a Kray brother. As he put it, he already had too many eyes on him". He continued: "The fact that he is the brother of the twins Reggie and Ronnie may explain

some of the events of the case. However, you will appreciate no man is his brothers' keeper, and whatever his brothers may have done some 30 years ago cannot in any way adversely affect this defendant."

Mr Kray and Mr Field were dealing with a man they knew as Jack and his associates, Mr Kelsey-Fry said, but "unfortunately for Kray, Field and Gould", Jack and his associates

with whom they struck the deal, "were not all they seemed to be".

"In fact, Jack was an undercover police officer. In the modern era it is a legitimate weapon for police in their battle against serious crime to infiltrate the underworld... it is no defence for those caught to say 'well if I had known they were police officers I wouldn't have supplied them with drugs'."

The jurors were told they

would hear tape-recorded conversations made by undercover officers. Mr Kelsey-Fry said they would hear Mr Kray admit he was involved in drug dealing.

Ronald Field and Robert Gould were not on trial because they had already pleaded guilty to supplying cocaine. Mr Kray, of Sanderstead, south London, denies one charge of offering to supply cocaine, and a second of supplying 2kg of the drug.

Judge Michael Carroll told the jury: "During the course of this trial you will be under the surveillance of police officers when you are not in court. The surveillance of jurors by police officers nowadays is not unusual. It is certainly no cause for alarm and the fact you have surveillance in this case is no reflection whatsoever on the defendant". The court was adjourned until today.

Henry Moore classic sold for £1.36m helps pay daughter's legal bills

Stephen Goodwin
Heritage Correspondent

A reclining figure by Henry Moore fetched £1.36m in New York on Tuesday evening at the start of a sale of 44 works of art left by the sculpture to his daughter, Mary Danowski.

The sale by Sotheby's, which continued yesterday, had been expected to net Mrs Danowski £6m, but valuable works by Cézanne and Degas failed to reach their reserve prices.

A long-running legal battle with the Henry Moore Foundation, which owns most of her father's prodigious output, has left Mrs Danowski with a stack of lawyers' bills. Last year she lost a claim to 215 bronze sculptures worth £100m in the foundation's collection.

Mary Spencer Moore Danowski, 50, an only child and married to an American art dealer, was given many works by her father. The pieces auctioned in New York were from

her personal collection and family trusts.

The classic piece *Reclining Figure - Bone Skirt*, acquired by a private collector for £1.36m, is a monumental carving in travertine marble dating from 1978. At the time Moore was spending the summers at a villa he had built near the Carrara quarries in Italy.

Moore's hero, Michelangelo, had worked with Carrara marble centuries before. The 69in-long figure is one of an acclaimed series exemplifying an observation Moore made in 1931: "The human figure is what interests me deeply, but I have found principles of form and rhythm from the study of natural objects such as pebbles, rocks, bones, trees, plants... bones have marvellous structural strength and hard tenseness of form, subtle transition of one shape into the next..."

Two other works from the artist's collection sold on Tuesday were Jean-François Millet's



Classic piece: Henry Moore's *Reclining Figure - Bone Skirt* fetched £1.36m when sold at Sotheby's in New York on Tuesday. The sculpture was bought by a private collector

La Barattense in black chalk on paper, bought by a dealer for £189,100, and George Seurat's *Les Femmes d'Alger*, bought by a private collector for £192,510. Moore belonged to a group of major artists who were also

distinguished collectors in their own right. Two works, however, fell short of Mrs Danowski's aspirations. The *Trois Baigneuses* from Paul Cézanne's bathers series carried a tag of £1m to £1.3m, but was not sold. Nor was

a pastel by Edgar Degas of a woman combing her hair which had been estimated at between £310,000 and £434,000.

Mrs Danowski helped to set up the foundation in 1977 to ease Moore's £1m-a-year tax

bills. When he died, aged 88, in 1986, the foundation owned 669 of his sculptures and thousands of drawings. But Mrs Danowski, in her unsuccessful law suit, claimed that bronzes made between 1977 and her

father's death were part of the family estate.

Literature accompanying the sale dwelt on a happier time with the young Mary learning by the artist's side at their Hoglands home in Hertfordshire.

"He was the most tremendous teacher," she recalled. "He would use a Vuillard or a piece of African sculpture to make a visual point... Every second of his life he was refining three-dimensional form."

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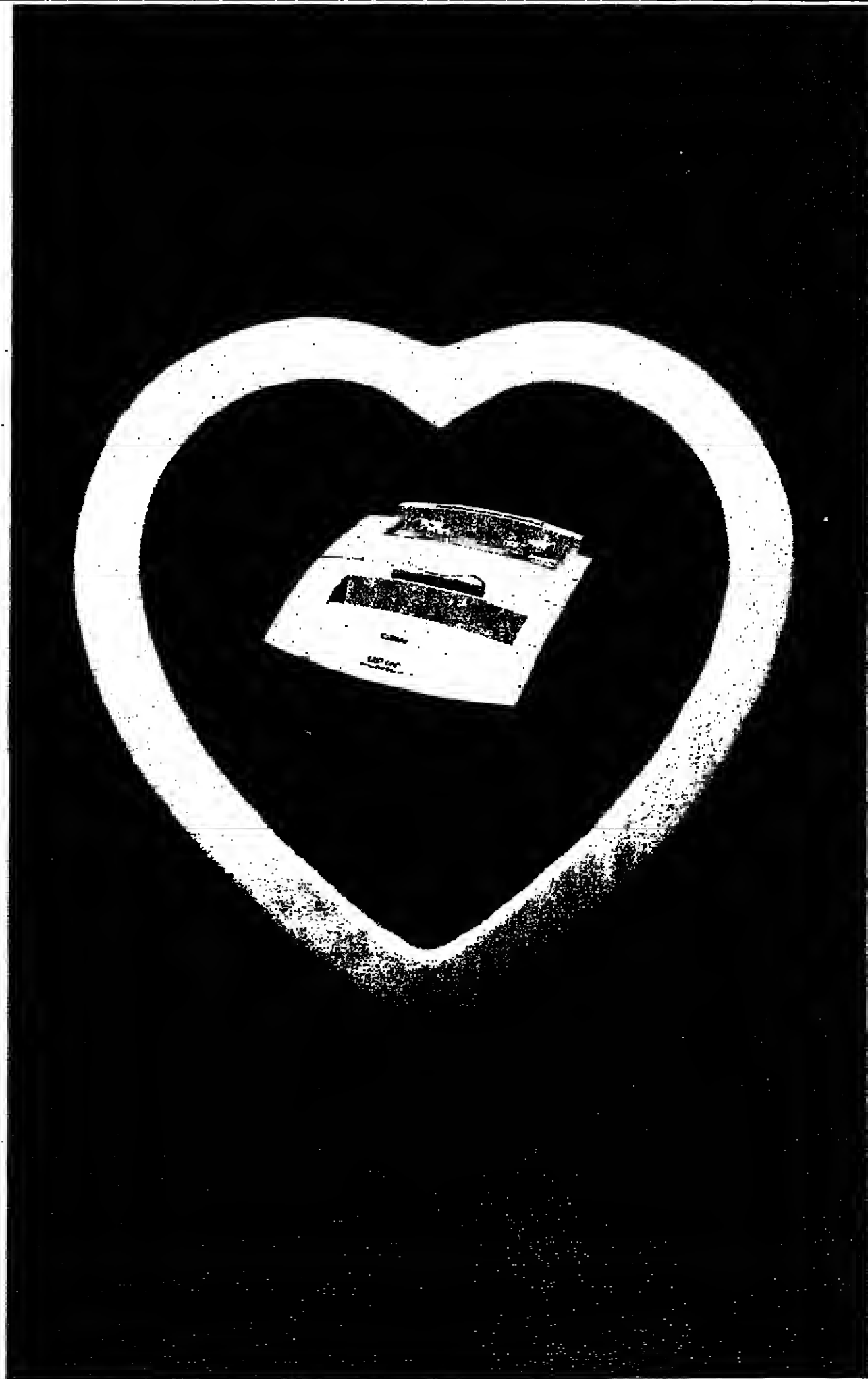
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Nato forges historic deal with Moscow

Alliance to expand eastward in partnership pact with its old foe

Tony Barber
Europe Editor

Nato and Russia reached agreement yesterday on a pact which aims to establish a close partnership between the former Cold War enemies while permitting the Western alliance to expand into eastern Europe.

Russia's Foreign Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, and Nato's Secretary-General, Javier Solana, clinched the deal in Moscow after months of negotiations often characterised by Russian criticism of Nato's enlargement plans.

The pact, whose precise terms were not made public, is expected to be formally signed at a ceremony in Paris on 27 May. "It is a big victory for the world community, and it is a big victory for Russia and all governments in the world that are interested in peace and co-op-



creation," Mr Primakov said.

It remained unclear whether Russia had achieved one of its main objectives – a firm guarantee from Nato that it will not place nuclear weapons, foreign troops and significant amounts of military infrastructure in new member states. Nato has been reluctant to put such commit-

ments in writing, but on the nuclear question it points out that it has no intention of making new deployments of the kind feared by Russia.

Mr Solana, who described the negotiations as "very tough", said the agreement would strengthen European stability and open a new age in Western-

Russian relations. The French government, which has been keen to promote a Nato-Russian relationship, described the pact as "an essential event in the definition of the new architecture of European security".

The agreement does not mean that Russia has dropped its objections to Nato's expan-

sion, or its belief that the Western alliance should transform itself by developing its political identity and placing more emphasis on peacekeeping. "So far, there has been no serious progress in this direction," said Russia's Defence Minister, Igor Rodionov, underlining the widespread view in Moscow that

Nato still represents a potential threat to Russian security. However, President Boris Yeltsin made clear at his summit with President Bill Clinton in Helsinki in March that Russia, lacking the means to prevent Nato's expansion, would, for now, settle for a pact that defined a special relationship with

the alliance. The pact is expected to guarantee Russia a significant voice in Nato's deliberations, without allowing it to block particular decisions. Once approved by Nato's 16 governments, and by Mr Yeltsin, the pact will clear the way for several ex-Communist countries in central and eastern



Bear hug: Javier Solana, Nato Secretary-General, (left, in near picture) and Russian Foreign Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, give each other a pat on the back, far left, before emerging to meet the media in Moscow

Photograph: AP

Europe to be invited to join the alliance at its Madrid summit in July. The leading candidates are the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, but some states also favour the early inclusion of Romania and Slovenia.

Nato insists that its doors will remain open to new members after the initial wave of enlargement, due to be completed by 1999. However, some defence experts think that Russia will draw a line in the sand if Nato tries to absorb other countries, notably the Baltic states.

In remarks likely to increase the Kremlin's hostility to Baltic entry into Nato, Estonia's President, Lennart Meri, said in Budapest yesterday that his country wanted to join others in presenting "an uncompromising challenge to the empire of evil, or, more accurately, to the shadow of its former self". The term "evil empire", made famous by President Ronald Reagan in the early 1980s, has been little used recently.

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ST0009/IND006/3

Western oil firms face Central Asia's political minefield

JJ Fergusson
Ashkhabad

Some analysts say Central Asia is the next Middle East. Turkmenistan has 21,000 billion cubic metres of gas, the third largest reserve in the world. Neighbouring Uzbekistan has comparable amounts of gas, while the oil reserves of Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan are legends in the industry.

However, these countries have a problem: how to get their products to market. It is partly a question of technology and money, but just as important are the politics, pitting Russia against Iran, and drawing in the Western powers and their oil and gas companies.

This was the central dilemma preoccupying the heads of seven Central Asian states, plus Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, who gathered under the aegis of ECO (Economic Co-operation Organisation) in Ashkhabad to discuss how best to capitalise on the region's enormous reserves of oil and gas.

The existing pipelines of all the former Soviet states naturally go north towards Russia, which is unable, or unwilling, to pay the full price for their products. Since 1993, moreover, Russia has severely limited the amount of oil and gas passing through its territory in order to protect its own exports. None of the alternative routes is easy, since the region is mostly land-locked.

One possibility is to go due east to Japan, but the cost of laying a pipe across the whole of China makes it unlikely. West across the Caspian Sea is a better bet, though tanker transportation costs are prohibitive at \$60 (£38) a ton; which is the reason for a proposed oil pipeline under the Caspian Sea from the giant Kazakh oil field of Tengiz to Baku, through Georgia or Armenia to Turkey.

On Tuesday, however, before curtailing his visit to tend to the earthquake at home, Iran's President Ali Akbar Hashemi

Rafsanjani trumped everyone by reviving a plan for a line running due south through Turkmenistan and eastern Iran to the deep sea terminal at Bandar Abbas on the Persian Gulf. This is the best and shortest route of them all: it is a rule of thumb in the pipeline business that the fewer borders you have to cross to get to market, the better. Western oil companies would have looked into the Iran option long ago were it not for the small matter of US sanctions against companies doing business with Iran.

"There's no question about

ideologically the closest to the fundamentalist Taliban, who control two-thirds of Afghanistan, through which any line must pass, amounts to blatant political interference. Unocal insists that when they teamed up with Delta they had never even heard of the Taliban.

"Unocal is the leader of the consortium and we operate a policy of strict political neutrality," says Marty Miller, the company's vice president for new ventures in Central Asia. "We expect our partners to do the same."

But politics and business cannot always be separated. While the ousted Afghan president, Burhanuddin Rabbani, was invited by Turkmenistan to the ECO meeting, the Taliban were not. This week, the fundamentalists complained bitterly – in a statement they said they were the "real representatives" of Afghanistan. They specifically accused Iran of prolonging the Afghan war by supporting the Taliban's northern enemies, simply so that the pipeline might be built through their country instead.

Unocal's other difficulty is that although the Taliban want a pipeline, they don't seem to want Unocal's pipeline. This week, via Radio Shari'ah in Kabul, the fundamentalists backed the bid of a rival gas line project, run by the famous Argentine company, Bridas. The Argentinians are prepared to start work on the line even before hostilities in Afghanistan have ceased, and the Taliban have gone for the bait. Unocal say such a risk is simply not acceptable to its shareholders. Bridas, meanwhile, are suing Unocal for "tortuous interference" in their business.

Watching this soap opera with particular attention are the Russians, half of whose export revenues have always come from oil and gas and who have the most to lose from the successful establishment of alternative routes.



Unhealthy Russians live short and risky lives

Phil Reeves
Moscow

Turn the clock back a century, and imagine you are in Russia. You are a 16-year-old male, struggling to live in an impoverished and backward world. The chances are only one in three that you are literate. Fate has some ghastly surprises in store which will claim the lives of countless millions of your countrymen, and perhaps your own: the First World War, revolution, civil war, famine, Stalin's purges, and a second global conflict in which millions more Russians will die.

And yet, despite all this slaughter, demographers believe your chances of survival to the age of 60 are slightly higher than those of your counterparts at the end of the 20th century.

A report compiled by a presidential commission in Moscow shows that between 1889 and today, 16-year-old males had a 56 per cent chance of reaching the age of 60. According to the researchers, modern mortality rates have shaved 2 per cent off those odds. The findings are symptoms of a crisis which has engulfed Russia since the collapse in the Soviet Union. Its population dropped by 350,000 in 1996 and its death rate is higher than any in Europe or the United States, and above most in Africa and Asia.

The Population Reference Service, a US research firm, estimates Russia's 147 million population will drop to 123 million in the next 33 years. The causes are multiple: the collapse of the state health system; an epidemic of heart disease accelerated by smoking, a terrible diet and rampant alcoholism; an unhealthy environment, and dismal safety standards.

In these trends, the report, compiled by the Commission on Women, Family and Demography, adds some depressing details: the odds of dying of accidental poisoning in Russia are 20 times higher than they are in the US; and men are 20 times more likely to die through murder than in Western Europe.

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international

Cook pledge to ease passage of single currency

John Litchfield
Paris

The Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, said yesterday that the Government, which holds the EU presidency in the first half of next year, would do "everything in its power" to make sure the single currency gets off to a sound start "whether we are part of it or not".

Mr Cook also said in an interview with *Le Monde* that Britain should join Economic Monetary Union if it proves to be a success. His comments echoed remarks that he made earlier this year but they represented a warmer attitude to EMU than the Labour position in the election campaign.

He went on, broadly, to back the French position in the debate on post-EMU management of the European economy. If there is a single currency, with a central bank deciding monetary policy, Mr Cook said, the powers of EU fi-

nance ministers should be reinforced, to allow a matching economic strategy devoted to "employment and growth". This is the argument deployed by Paris and supported by other EU countries, but resisted by Bonn.

The Foreign Secretary said EMU raised difficult financial and economic questions for Britain. It was not "appropriate" at this stage to speculate on when the Government might put the question of membership to the British people. The possibility of a referendum before the 1999 launch date had not been excluded but, with 18 months to go, it would have a serious impact on the Government's crowded timetable of priorities.

Mr Cook also refused to comment on 2002 - the year when euro notes and coins begin to circulate - as a possible British target date. But he added: "If the single currency is launched, and if it is a success, I have already said, that, in the long term, Britain should join."

His comments, and other European actions and words by the new Government, drew an approving editorial from *Le Monde*: "Great Britain is no longer kicking for touch. It wants to play in the middle of the European field." The most important clue to the changed attitude across the Channel was Mr Cook's statement that he would do all in his power, as EU council president next year, to ensure the success of EMU.

The odds for Europe's single currency starting on time in 1999 have improved over the past month and optimism among commentators has rarely been higher for a core launch group of six countries, a Reuters survey showed yesterday.

An exclusive poll of the views of 49 economists and political analysts across Europe gave an average likelihood of 82 per cent that EMU would start on time in January 1999, compared with an average rating of 80 per cent in April.



Light in the world: A Buddhist monk adding his contribution to the sea of lanterns put up to celebrate Buddha's birthday yesterday at the Chogyo Temple in Seoul, South Korea. Buddhism is one of the traditional religions of the country. Photograph: Ahn Young-joon/AP

New York gays on alert as detectives hunt serial killer

David Osborne

America's latest serial killer might be a good-looking, 27-year-old gay man from San Diego named Andrew Cunanan, who has been linked by police to a cross-country murder spree that has left four men dead in three states.

Among the victims tied by the FBI to Mr Cunanan is 72-year-old Lee Miglin, a wealthy and high-flying property developer from Chicago. His body was found wrapped in plastic and paper in his home's garage on 4 May.

The gay community in New York, meanwhile, was on high alert yesterday following police statements that Mr Cunanan

might be in Manhattan, which has a large homosexual population. The last killing Mr Cunanan is believed to have committed was of a 45-year-old cemetery caretaker in New Jersey last Friday.

The murder trail began, however, in Minneapolis which had been home to two men believed to have been former lovers of Mr Cunanan in San Diego. The body of David Madison, a 33-year-old architect, was found by fishermen beside a lake north of the city on 3 May. A few days before, police had found the body of the other friend, Jeffrey Trail, 28, in the attic of Mr Madison's house.

Chicago's elite society is still reeling from the death of Mr

Miglin. Police made the connection with Mr Cunanan after finding a red jeep close to the murder scene that was traced back to Mr Madison. Subsequently, Mr Miglin's Lexus limousine was found at the New Jersey murder scene.

There have been some reports that Mr Cunanan was a close friend of Mr Miglin's 25-year-old son, who is a struggling actor in California. There is also speculation that Mr Cunanan recently tested positive for the HIV virus and his murder rampage may be an attempt at taking revenge on former lovers.

In comments to one Minneapolis newspaper, Mr Cunanan's mother, who lives in Illinois, candidly described her

son as a "high-class homosexual prostitute".

In New York, gay community groups were yesterday festooning Greenwich Village and Chelsea with fliers carrying a picture of Mr Cunanan and offering a \$10,000 reward for any sighting of him.

The manhunt meanwhile continues. The FBI issued an "Armed and Dangerous" alert for Mr Cunanan, giving a full description of the suspect together with photographs of him. Criminalologists warned, however, that fugitives can easily disappear in the United States. And although the hunt was being concentrated in the eastern US, there was no knowing where Mr Cunanan may be.

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Peking bomb 'was a suicide'

Teresa Poole
Peking

Peking police yesterday said that the man who died when a homemade bomb exploded in a city park was a migrant worker committing suicide. Officials refused to reveal the contents of the letter, or any details of the victim beyond the fact that he came from Hunan province, central China.

The explosion, on Tuesday afternoon, was in Zhongshan

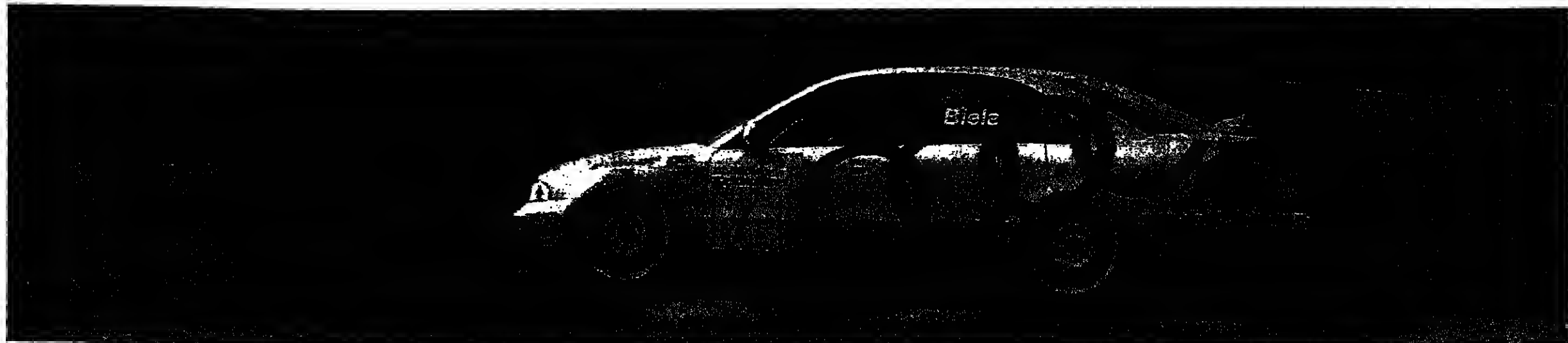
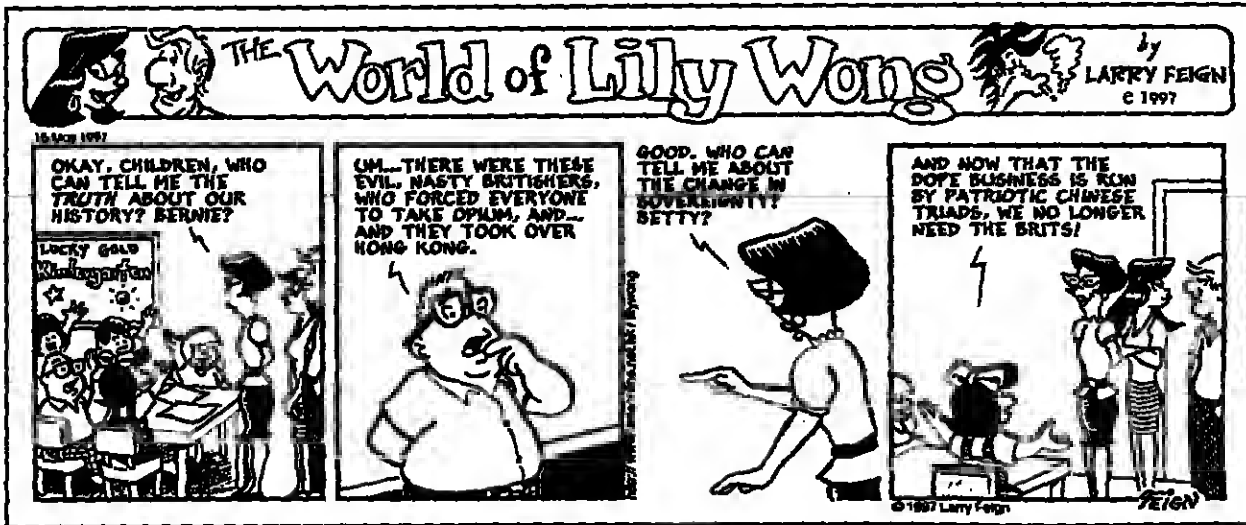
park, next to the compound where China's leaders live and work and across the road from Tiananmen Square. Yesterday crows managers had things under control: cleaners and ticket-sellers who had been in the park swore they had heard and noticed nothing at the time of the blast. China normally puts a crows clamp on sensitive events but traffic disruption during Tuesday's rush-hour meant people must have known something had happened. Yes-

terday's *Peking Daily* said a Hunan man had committed suicide. China's leaders are particularly concerned that no such incidents take place in the run-up to the return of Hong Kong on 1 July. Security has already been tightened since 7 March, when a bus bomb exploded in a shopping street.

No one has been arrested over that crime or other explosions in Peking around the time, though suspicions centred on Muslim separatists from

Xinjiang province, western China, or state-enterprise workers who have lost their jobs.

Mystery still surrounds a bus blast on Monday in Shunde, Guangdong province, in which a young couple set off a bomb, killing themselves and three others. Explosions on buses and trains regularly take place in China because people are illegally transporting explosives, which are easily obtainable in a country with a vast network of public and private mines.



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international

Zairean rebel fails to turn up for talks

Mediators lose patience as Kinshasans turn capital into 'dead city'

Mary Braid
Kinshasa

Last minute international efforts to find a diplomatic solution to Zaire's civil war appeared to falter yesterday when rebel leader Laurent Kabila failed to show for talks aboard the South African supply ship the *Ouenqu*.

Five hours after the talks, aimed at bringing President Mobutu Sese Seko's 32-year dictatorship to a peaceful end should have begun, President Nelson Mandela, were still waiting in the Congolese port of Pointe-Noire for Mr Kabila to turn up.

The rebel leader was in the Angolan enclave of Cabinda, though Joe Modise, the South African Defence Minister, had been sent by helicopter to Soyo, further south, to collect him, as previously arranged.

The South Africans, who had



Waiting game: Congolese President Pascal Lissaba and President Nelson Mandela of South Africa in Pointe-Noire, Congo yesterday before the aborted talks. Photograph: AP

been reluctant to board the ship without an agreement on a transfer of power, made it clear that this was the final diplomatic effort.

Officially, the talks are still

due to go ahead this morning. But the two sides are so far apart that it is unclear whether the meeting can go ahead.

South Africa's good will was

tests when it took two days to get the memo on board the *Ouenqu* at the same time.

In the 10 days since South Africa staged the first meeting between the dictator and the

rebel, the country's deputy president, Thabo Mbeki, has shuttled across the continent trying to sell a power-sharing deal to President Mobutu and Mr Kabila which would give the rebels

60 per cent of the seats in a parliament, and would leave the Mobutists and the opposition to share the rest.

President Mobutu would

cede power to a transitional authority, which could then hand over power to Mr Kabila, saving the President's face. But until now the rebels have insisted they are interested in nothing less than a direct and immediate transfer of power from President Mobutu to Mr Kabila.

Mr Kabila's rebel forces are within 100km of Kinshasa and are pledged to take it by the weekend, if talks fail. The rebellion, backed by Rwanda and Uganda, began in October and the rebels now hold most of the country.

Yesterday Kinshasa's 5 million residents stayed home in response to an opposition call for a *ville morte* (dead city) day. In protest at proposals that would allow President Mobutu to transfer power to Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo, a controversial Roman Catholic cleric.

The streets of the city were deserted except for groups of Kinshasans listening to radio for news of the talks they had hoped would prevent a battle for the capital. A handful of gravediggers at the local Kinshasa cemetery were among the minority that chose to work.

In a city lying in ruins, they are paid less than a dollar a month to bury the dead but turn up every day none the less. "We are working out of respect for the dead," said Joseph Mayala,

Swiss may freeze Mobutu's assets

Geneva (Reuters) — Switzerland said it was considering a Zairean rebel request to freeze President Mobutu Sese Seko's assets in the country. A Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said the demand came from the interim public prosecutor in the rebel-held city of Lumumbashi. "This request is now being examined," she said. Switzerland had previously said it would consider such a request only if it came from the government.

Swiss media estimate Mobutu's fortune to be about \$4bn (£2.5bn) spread among secret bank accounts in Switzerland, where he also owns a luxury villa.

35, a father of two, who relies on direct payments from bereaved relatives of a few dollars or some beer.

Tens of thousands have been buried at Kinshasa since it opened in 1978. Like Kinshasa, it is falling apart. It has reverted to jungle because few relatives can afford to pay for their graves to be tended. Crumbling concrete crosses, marked RIP in cheap, runny black paint, are lost in shoulder high grass infested with snakes.

The workers stuff leaves up their noses to kill the stench as they work because the government no longer provides masks or equipment.

Michel Manyanya, too old to know his age, said he keeps up his job in the hope of a return to better government and decent pay.

Asked about President Mobutu's responsibility for the dilapidated cemetery and city he becomes agitated. Like many elderly Zaireans he is still terrified to criticise President Mobutu out loud. "Just look around you," he says "see for yourself."

His younger work mates were less reticent. They said they hated their president and hoped he was about to stand down. They would accept anyone, with no guarantees for the future or democracy, in his place.

significant shorts

Denver jury shown film of suspected bomb lorry

Prosecutors showed jurors surveillance-camera pictures of a truck moving toward the Oklahoma City federal building two minutes before an explosion ripped the building apart. The photos showed the vehicle creeping by in the background outside the apartment lobby. At 9.02am on 19 April 1995 a truck bomb exploded outside the building, killing 168 people. The truck, which a witness said Timothy McVeigh rented two days before the bombing, was linked to the blast through the vehicle identification number on a mangled axle. AP - Denver

French graft inquiry may widen

The head of a French service which covers some of the same functions as MI5 may face legal action for obstructing investigation of alleged slush-funding of President Chirac's party. Judge Eric Halphen, investigating the RPR's finances, has asked for his power of inquiry to be extended to the activities of Yves Bertrand, head of Renseignements Généraux. Messages sent to Mr Halphen from an apparently well-placed deep-throat implied the RG withheld evidence that the RPR has slush-funds in Switzerland. John Lichfield - Paris

Bangladesh peace deal near

Bangladesh said it had agreed with tribal leaders in end a decades-old insurgency in the south-eastern Chittagong Hill Tracts and soon would sign a peace deal. "We have reached consensus on all issues. We are going to sign a peace deal very soon," chief government negotiator Abul Hasanat Abdullah said. Reuters - Dhaka

Yemenis tire of jihad talk

Yemen authorities have arrested an Islamic opposition activist for allegedly calling for a holy war against the government. Ali Zein el-Abideen al-Jifri was detained after ignoring repeated government warnings to stop his anti-government incitement, officials said. AP - Aden

Minorities hail Ukraine treaty

Romania's ethnic minorities, including its 300,000-strong Ukrainian community, welcomed the imminent signature of a post-Communist treaty with Ukraine, seen as vital for the country's NATO membership bid. But nationalists denounced the pact and said it dashed any hope of recovering historic Romanian territories seized by the Soviet Union during the Second World War. Reuters - Bucharest

Serial killer terrorises Cologne

Three blue bin-bags containing severed human limbs have been found in a Cologne suburb in the space of two days. Police said there was no evidence of any link with a suspected serial killer in Belgium who recently terrorised Mous, where three bin-bags containing body parts have been found. Reuters - Cologne

Turkish attack worries London

Britain said it was worried by reports that thousands of Turkish troops were attacking separatist Kurdish bases in northern Iraq, and urged Ankara not to take excessive steps to ensure its security. The Anatolian news agency reported clashes in northern Iraq between the Turkish troops and the Turkish separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party. Reuters - London

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Small miracles are the hardest



Cooling devices: A woman refreshing herself at the Stachus fountain in Munich, Germany, yesterday as the year's first heatwave - forecast to last over the weekend - reached Bavaria with temperatures of nearly 30C
Photograph: AP/Frank Augstein

National library speaks volumes about Germany

By Karacs

Low-key opening for Frankfurt's book palace

Germany's answer to the Bibliothèque Nationale or the British Library. Yesterday the German Library - the equivalent of the grandest libraries in Britain and France - moved to its new home.

But there is a difference. While the building of new French and British national libraries has been surrounded with fanfare, the German equivalent was opened yesterday with scarcely a public murmur.

The heap of cubes becometh to be known as the Deutsche Bibliothek is a fitting monument to timid national ambitions. Modern but less futuristic than its rival in Paris, and nowhere near as expensive as the behemoth on Euston Road, it nevertheless captures the national mood as well as its more illustrious counterparts.

It cost less than the equivalent of £100m, and you would have to travel hundreds of miles from the capital to browse through any of its 15 million volumes.

This mecca of German letters is in Frankfurt, capital of books and money and little else.

Berlin boasts an annex, housing the music collection, and the east German city of Leipzig doubles up as the second German Library, with the same books as Frankfurt, plus a few specialised collections of its own.

This state of affairs would no doubt be regarded in Britain and France as a shambles, and the Leipzig site is certainly an accident of history.

The new building was conceived in 1981 and the architectural plans were approved in the fateful year of re-unification, nine years later.

Leipzig's dowry could not just be carted off to the West, and thus was born this typical German compromise.

The decision to keep the collections away from the centre of political power was deliberate.

Our French friends have erected their national library in their capital, Paris, centralising

all its tasks," said Chancellor Helmut Kohl at yesterday's opening ceremony.

The new building of the German Library stands in Frankfurt, not in the federal capital. This spatial and organisational structure is a clear recognition of Germany's federal character - a special feature that will not be lost in a united Europe.

That was his cue to ramble on about Europe, about devolution, culture and subsidiarity. Never again did the word "nation" pass his lips. It is just as well, for that would have only provoked yawns in his audience. Klinsmann and Co apart, there is little enthusiasm in Germany

for national institutions, most of which have been stripped of all their relevance.

Germans can be fiercely patriotic about their home village or town and they identify strongly with their home regions but above that the Bund - the federal state - is a concept almost as insignificant as the European Union, and "nation" a word to be used only sparingly in polite company.

Most real power resides in the 16 Land capitals, each lavishing patronage on opera houses, libraries and subsidised theatres. It is doubtful whether most readers in Hamburg or Berlin will ever experience the urge to travel to Frankfurt to look at a book. Fortunately, much of the library's vast database can be accessed on-line.

Why the Italians like English any way they speak it

ROME DAYS

It is just as well I have a reasonable command of the English language, or else I don't think I would be able to understand the cutting edge of Italian culture these days. Or, to be more precise, despite having what I consider to be a reasonable command of the English language, I am not sure it is possible to penetrate the linguistic mystifications of present-day Italian culture.

No question, English is the hip language of the moment. It is popping up in the media, in advertisements, in film titles, even in the rough and tumble of political debate. One popular newspaper supplement at the moment is called *Perfect English* - unfortunately something of an idealistic concept in the present climate, but one that has the whole country mesmerised.

"When the going gets tough, the tough get going." That is the set slogan of Lamberto Dini, the Foreign Minister. Not devastatingly original, but at least he gets the English right. "Hello, honeychop" is what all the teenage sweethearts are whispering to each other, inspired by a television advert for an aftershave called *Green Generation*, in which a macho hunk listens to endless answer-machine messages from his girlfriends but never calls them back.

"Stop stop" is what the Italian distributor of a nappy-making company thinks the English say as they secure their babies' bottoms with fully absorbent plastic. "Any way he dose, you like". That was one newspaper reporter's version of Mikhail Gorbachev's Sinatra doctrine -

letting the countries of the former Eastern bloc do it their way. Clearly, quite a few of these deformations are due to the quirks of a country with no solid tradition of foreign language-learning. One of last year's film comedy offerings was called *Lo Spik English*. But many are the result of a very Italian inventiveness, a cheerful "more-or-less" attitude to life, and a complete lack of fear of experimenting even with another language. The contrast with France, with its paranoia of foreign contamination, is strikingly refreshing. The results range from the comic to the bewildering.

Take newspaper headlines, where it seems the lessons of



Tough talker: Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini

British tabloid journalism - picking on a handful of key words and repeating them *ad nauseam* - have been taken enthusiastically to heart, with endless variations on "baby", "story", "lady", "vip" (for VIP), and so on.

The meanings of these terms

are ever so slightly out of kilter with what you would expect. "Baby" does not refer to an infant so much as someone unusually young, such as "baby pensionato" for a 45-year-old who has stopped working.

"Lady" is used for any politician's wife - not just First Lady but also Lady Prodi, Lady Berlusconi, even Lady Blair.

The word "story" is lobbed at random into any headline which announces a good tale to come. Thus "Baby lady story" might refer to the saga of a seasoned politician who seduced and married a teenager.

The king of headline buzzwords, though, is "killer". Not only are there the inevitable

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Berisha tries to pull a fast one over poll

Andrew Gumbel

President Sali Berisha of Albania pushed his country's government to the brink of collapse and angered the international community yesterday by threatening to dissolve parliament and call fresh elections using an electoral law contested by every political party except for his own.

Ignoring the principles of consensus government agreed in March to prevent the country collapsing, he went to his old constituency to inaugurate the campaign. The night before, MPs from his Democratic Party had pushed through their own draft of an electoral law still theoretically under discussion with the opposition.

They acted while the Prime Minister, Bashkim Fino, of the main opposition Socialist Party, was in Washington for talks. The law they approved accommodated enough of the opposition party's demands for greater proportional representation to avoid looking like a total whitewash, but fell far short of a satisfactory compromise.

The opposition threatened to boycott the poll and leave Mr Fino's government of national reconciliation.

Mr Berisha appeared to be testing the international community's resolve, to see how much he could get away with. Signals yesterday were that Italy, leader of the multinational peace-keeping force in Albania, and the US were not prepared to indulge him. By late afternoon, Mr Berisha appeared to have taken stock of the criticism and his order to dissolve parliament showed no signs of having been carried through, but the situation remained on a knife-edge.

Andrew Gumbel

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Royalty meets radicalism in Wonderland

Every day in every way, we go on trying to adjust. Tony Blair rises to the despatch box, and we look about thinking, "Where am I?" Labour politicians are called "Ministers", and their views are called "government policy". Everything is the reverse of the way it has been since more than half the population can remember. What kind of Lewis Carroll world is this? Michael Heseltine is spotted wandering the pavement, where formerly a car would whisk him off without any of us noticing anything but the outriders.

The most disconcerting thing about yesterday's pomp and pretension was hearing our domestically bespectacled monarch recite left-wing language – "my government", she said, will "attack" youth unemployment, obliterate competition in the health service, and (as she didn't say) generally set about the ears of "my" previous government. (Actually it's not her government, it's ours – but that reform can wait a while.)

On the one side, we are all startled by how much has changed; yet at the same time we are pinching ourselves and asking how much has really changed. In his response to the Queen's Speech, Mr Blair pointed out the way in which cartoonists, commentators and saloon-bar pontificators had falsely repeated during the

election campaign that there was little difference between the Old Tories and New Labour. Thankfully, it was never a trap this paper fell into: to us, it always seemed clear that Mr Blair meant what he said when he promised (warned?) that he would be more radical than people realised. And he has already started to fulfil that promise.

On some fronts, Labour plans to undo what it sees as Tory error: health service competition; inadequately stern opposition to the private possession of handguns; poor control of food quality. Mr Blair's government continues where continuation seems right, leaving intact many laws that it opposed while in opposition but now accepts in government. But yesterday's 22-Bill programme was mostly not of the undoing kind. Overwhelmingly, the legislative contents of the Queen's Speech aim to set a new course for government.

What tentative interpretations should we place on the "project" (as New Labour MPs horribly call it) thus far? Uncharitably, we might start by wondering if the Notting Hill set have been afflicted with a little surge of New Puritanism. After all, there is quite a bit of banning in this Queen's Speech. Handguns for a start (hip hip) – but also tobacco advertising (hurray), unruly behaviour by children and neighbourhood reprobrates.

But it would be a cheap jibe: laws are usually about preventing things, rather than enabling them, and Labour is no different to any other government in this. After all, those things are well worth banning. Indeed, since we're in the banning mode, why not ban phrases like "the project" from our political language? Could we also delete the phrase "on message" before it infects every part of our national life? And (by the way) what happened to the ambition to ban the killing of foxes for sport?

It is good, however, to see that the eagerness to ban things has not yet

ranged into the realm of banning newspapers' freedom to inquire into the messy behaviour of public people by introducing a restrictive privacy law: Mr Blair should think very carefully before aiming that measure at the statute book.

Banning, however, is not what government is mainly about, and it is surely not what New Labour should be about. It should be about creating opportunity. The minimum wage might be seen as another "banning" measure – banning employers from paying their workers the lowest rate they can get away with. In fact,

though, the minimum wage is about creating the opportunity for people to break free of reliance on welfare. It is good, too, to see that Mr Blair has placed this measure in front of any attempt to legislate on trade-union representation: here he has got the priorities right.

Overall, the Speech is a good balance between grand social measures (about which we still know too little to judge, notably in the Big Issue of education), and smaller but significant changes of direction. But there is one area where it seems fair to pose sharp questions, and raise our own standard: constitutional change. Creating a New Britain is first of all about social reform, yes; but it is also important that this government takes its historic opportunity to effect deeper political reforms.

Yesterday witnessed a healthy start. Incorporating the European Convention on Human Rights will effect a profound change in our political and judicial culture, enabling ordinary people to see their rights fought over in their own national courts, and judged by their own judges. Nobody should underestimate the significance of this change. Equally, devolving power to Scotland and Wales (as those nations will surely vote in referendums to do) will bring about a long-term shift in our culture. Bring-

ing back strategic government for London, where nearly one in 10 British people lives, is no small matter, either: only pray that Labour keeps the new authority streamlined, and avoids creating a monster to rival the wasteful old GLC.

But what happened to reform of the House of Lords? Will that promise be honoured, or is it just a vague threat, to be held in reserve and used only if peers attempt to frustrate the Commons? Why not a White Paper on that, as on freedom of information?

Reforming the Lords is not to be ducked. Moreover, it will be an immensely popular measure, everywhere except in the House of Lords. Abolishing the voting rights of hereditary peers is a long overdue reform that the nation overwhelmingly wants. This government's true radicalism will first be tested by its social programme – but it will eventually be proved by its determination to effect root and branch constitutional change. And that must, ultimately, include voting reform too. We are willing to wait a parliamentary session or two; but we hope that those new young backbenchers, who by a large majority believe in electoral reform, will not grow old and cynical before they get the chance to transform our political system.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Chancellor's act of 'good faith'

Sir: Diane Abbott MP (Letters, 14 May) argues that there is no causal relationship between "central bank independence and low inflation". She would of course be correct if the Conservatives were still in office. Sadly, the history of financial institutions and the money markets under Labour governments is one of mutual distrust and suspicion – therefore this Labour government needs to prove its integrity and competency. Labour was not elected on a programme of wholesale reform of the "commanding heights" of the economy. It was elected to deliver pragmatic economic and social policies, acknowledging the economic constraints imposed on an individual national state. With this in mind, the Chancellor's move to allow "symbolic" freedom for the central bank to set interest rates is an act of good faith.

COUNSELLOR JEREMY KILLINGRAY
London Borough of Hackney (Lab)
London E8

Sir: Diane Abbott and Robin Ramsay (Letters, 14 May) are themselves guilty of missing the point of giving the "Old Lady" her independence.

Mr Ramsay talks emotively of the sacrifice of British manufacturing in the interests of an inflation target. Manufacturers are eager for a low and sustainable level of inflation together with stable interest rates rather than large, mistimed swings in rates. Independence is a means to this end, something that is recognised by a very export-dependent German manufacturing sector.

In allowing independence, the Chancellor has recognised the Leninist principle that to destroy a liberal society you must allow the debasement of the currency and to protect it the value of the money must be stabilised.

Price and interest rate stability will remove uncertainty, increase investment, growth and jobs.

ROBERT COFFE
London W13

Vote counting is a theatrical event

Sir: H B Gould (Letters, 10 May), having observed a few clumsy fingers at a count of votes on 1 May, advocates electronic voting.

The UK's antiquated system is both enormously robust and takes place in full view of observers from all the parties. Occasionally a few papers may get into the wrong pile, but if this would have a significant effect on the result, the procedures for a recount ensure that extra checks are carried out.

Each declaration is a valuable theatrical event. The complete process, extending over a night and most of the next day, provides the nation with a memorable experience which has all the excitement of a race. Think of what it would be like if, instead, voters were provided with an on-line keypad on which to vote. The moment the polls closed a computer in each constituency would have all the data needed to declare the local result. The national result could be declared a few nanoseconds later.

But someone would have had to make absolutely sure that no file could be hacked, that the network was in perfect order, that the software had been tested and that



all the computers were backed up by stand-by machines. All this would need an investment of tens of millions of pounds – hardly worth it when general elections take place so infrequently.

Let's keep paper voting slips "on the table" and counted in full view.

BOB YOUNG
Brighton, East Sussex

Sir: H B Gould (Letter, 10 May) is right: electronic voting is perfectly feasible and efficient. Its first use, though, should be in the long-overdue reform of the archaic voting system of the House of Commons.

Voting in the House of Commons is a long and elaborate business. The members actually divide by trooping into lobbies... where they are counted like sheep by the clerks. This wastes a lot of time and ought to be altered, for sometimes an hour or more a day is wasted by this rather childish method of counting.

Thus the *Children's Encyclopedia* in 1921. Seventy-seven years later, with today's pressures, the practice is even more absurd. It is probably too much to hope for a sensible debating chamber, but the blowing away of a few cobwebs would help. Perhaps that wretched opera hat could go as well.

OLANGLY
Bristol

Minister found

Sir: If Stanley Alderson (Letter, 13 May) looks in the government list under Department of Trade and Industry he will find that John Battle is named as the minister for industry, energy, science and technology.

MARGARET EDMONDS
Bath

Cyclists blamed for the inept few

Sir: I write to agree with John Lewis (Letters, 14 May). I have cycled to work in London for 16 years, including through two pregnancies and carrying a young child on the back of the bike without serious accident. I am continually outraged by the behaviour of some other cyclists, whose behaviour is unlawful.

It not only means that we are all assumed to act in this way, but at times their actions have jeopardised my safety. It is enough that we have to contend with vehicle-led transport policy and tokenistic "cycleways", but that we should all take the blame for the actions of a minority of inept and often "fairweather" cyclists is unfair.

J LLOYD
London SE7

Sir: Only one feature of the replies by your motorist correspondents (Letters, 13 May) to Hugh Hollinghurst's letter about "lawbreaking cyclists" was surprising: it is the first time I have seen it suggested that cyclists pose a danger to motorists. Must it be pointed out that cyclists do not wear metal jackets and do not travel at 40 mph?

During my daily cycle ride between the station and my London office, I see vehicles crossing red lights in large numbers. I see vehicles speeding over pedestrian crossings. I see

pedestrians and cyclists regularly impelled by woeful disregard by motorists for safety and courtesy. I suggest that any sceptics watch a major London road junction for a few minutes.

I do not approve of lawbreaking by motorists or cyclists. Lawbreaking by cyclists sets back rather than advances the cyclists' cause. But it takes no more than a few moments' observation to see which is more common and which is the greater hazard.

EDWIN KILBY
Reed, Herefordshire

Sir: I heartily agree with John Lewis (Letter, 14 May) regarding cycling on footpaths being the result of laziness.

My local Lib Dem council has just spent a fortune carving up the Teddington roads to provide cycle paths. Whilst this has caused me, as a driver, great inconvenience due to the bizarrely laid out new road plan, it has certainly helped me, as a cyclist, feel slightly more secure.

However, I am frustrated and angry, when, as a pedestrian, I have to dive for cover as cyclists persist in racing along the pavements.

On two separate occasions in the past week I have been physically hit by cyclists who blatantly ignore the carefully painted cycle paths and still insist on using the pavements.

"Pavement rage" will undoubtedly be the new scourge of society and yes, it will be initiated by me.

JO HEPPELL
Teddington, Middlesex

Anorexics are ragingly hungry

Sir: A thought for those who are looking at the link between serotonin and satisfaction in anorexic people (report, 12 May). Over 20 years ago I lied and lied that I was full and could eat no more. I was so screamingly hungry I could only sleep four hours a night. I read books and made things to keep my mind and hands off food – it was a very busy and productive time – but I was ragingly hungry.

My younger sister also had a go at self-inflicted starvation and denied that she needed food. One day, before she took to falling over, she passed a pet shop. The smell of dog biscuits full of the nutrients her body craved was irresistible to her starving body. I don't know if some anorexics genuinely feel satiated. I do know that some are liars.

M ANI HARRIS
New Mills, Derbyshire

Solar power for Britain's homes

Sir: Congratulations to the Centre of Alternative Technology for installing Britain's largest solar roof (report, 12 May).

Unfortunately these solar events are a rarity in Britain. While other industrialised nations, notably Japan and America, are undertaking or planning massive national programmes which will see hundreds and thousands of homes

powered by this new clean technology, in Britain we have just two solar-powered homes.

Historic lack of support from previous governments is the cause. Britain has a strong solar industry, currently producing 10 per cent of the £500m global market. With new government support from the new Labour government our solar industry could be stronger.

Greenpeace is challenging the Government to commit to a minimum solar programme for Britain of 50,000 solar homes by 2010. This can be financed by diverting existing subsidies to the fossil fuel industry to finance the solar programme. This action would catalyse a £100m investment from the British solar industry, create new solar factories for Britain and produce 40,000 new jobs.

In opposition the Labour Party promised action on solar power, now they have the power to kick-start a world-class solar industry to help tackle the problem of climate change.

MARCUS RAND
Greenpeace
London N1

Animals excluded

Sir: In reviewing the good causes deserving of lottery money, I wonder if Gordon Brown will consider charities devoted to animal welfare, at the moment excluded.

I have found that many people are unaware of this fact and when brought to their attention consider it unfair. Many of these charities have suffered badly from reductions in donations since the lottery was begun.

JANE SPOTTISWOODE
Bala, Wales

Turing and the artificial mind

Sir: Michael Lockwood ("Man v Machine", 13 May), like so many others, has overrated the Turing test. The Turing test is not some goal or benchmark artificial intelligence (AI) researchers are (or should be) shooting for. It is a thought experiment designed to get us each to ask ourselves, "How do I know that anything other than myself experiences consciousness?"

If we give each other the benefit of the doubt, then why not extend that to something that passes the Turing test?

Beyond that role the test is not important. If and when we first implement an algorithm on silicon that experiences consciousness, it is very unlikely that it would pass the Turing test. (After all, we wouldn't expect some species out of *Star Trek* to pass the test either.)

The more important lesson from Alan Turing is the separation of algorithm from hardware. While the brain is very different from integrated circuits, nobody (pace Roger Penrose) has been able to argue that it is different enough given the substrate neutrality of algorithms. The arguments for strong AI are compelling. Saying that there is a lot about consciousness and the brain that we don't understand yet is an counter argument – it is mere wishful thinking.

JEFF GOLDBERG
Cranfield Computer Centre
Cranfield University

Remember the fall of Portillo

Sir: My heart goes out to Miles Kingston who missed the fall of Portillo on election night ("So where were you when Portillo fell?", 12 May). Dare I confess that – thanks to the forethought of my husband – I have the happy event on video and have watched it almost nightly since 2 May? Who would have thought that *schadenfreude* could give one quite such a buzz? And would Miles Kingston like the loan of it?

BARBARA TRAMOD
Oxford

Sir: I shared Miles Kingston's delight at the rolling of High Tory heads. Unlike him I did see the going down of Michael Portillo. I also caught the defeated candidate's speech and was pleasantly surprised by his humility, grace and sheer good manners.

It cannot have been easy for him. J H ANTHONY
West Down, North Devon

Sir: Miles Kingston proposes a roadside poster in the Lake District, saying "Last Tory Seat Before John O'Groats". Unfortunately he doesn't go quite far enough.

JIM WALLACE MP
(Orkney and Shetland, Lib Dem)
House of Commons
London SW1

Tory mutineers

Sir: Anthony Bevis ("Is there a Tory future?", 14 May) suggests that John Major jumped ship, rather, before sinking. On the contrary, he visibly stayed until the ship was gone. Is the captain, even of a piratical, mutineering crew of cut-throats, required to go the full six fathoms to the bottom while the rest of his jolly band thrash around on the surface, huddling each other with wreckage?

SARA CLARKE
High Peak, Derbyshire

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essay

It is only a scribblers' parliament

A large number of our MPs may be writers of books, from thrillers to diaries, but, says Boyd Tonkin, there is not an original author, thinker or visionary among them

When he wasn't scouring London streets for prostitutes to rescue, William Ewart Gladstone took a break from his prime ministerial duties by reading three books a day and penning learned tomes on Homer.

A century later, PMs and ministers usually do little more than sign the odd ghosted piece in the tabloids. The written word at book length appeals less to politicians now because it matters less to voters. In fact, some sort of nadir was touched when Lady Thatcher cheerfully let on that her idea of literary fun involved re-reading the cardboard-and-clockwork thrillers of Freddy Forsyth. When she came to compile her own memoirs, a team of hackroom wags – such as Oxford's convivial Professor Norman Stone – had to add those alien touches known as "jokes".

So it comes as something of a shock to discover that several dozen MPs of the 1997 vintage still care enough about long-distance print to write and edit books. One of the new intake, indeed, has proved so prolific over the past 15 years that he now has a "Selected Writings" to his credit – a volume that embraces short stories, memories of childhood and political theory. That the name on the spine (from Brandon Books) belongs to Gerry Adams only goes to show that heavy-duty authorship does not always confer infallibility. Even the ability to earn a good living between bard covers will not guarantee talent or trustworthiness. Rupert Allason, the defeated Tory who writes spy potboilers as "Nigel West", often upsets the secret services as he wrings every drop of fatuous gossip from his deep throats in MI5 and MI6.

The 1 May results closed the book on other Commons authors. Edwina Currie can now spend more time with her £300,000 advance as she moves from writing lubricious Westminster intrigues to soppy Scouse sagas. When the people of Chester dismissed Gyles Brandreth, they do doubt had other things on their mind apart from his recent debut novel *Who is Nick Saint?* – a schmaltzy Yuletide fable that makes it a *Wonderful Life* look like *Oedipus Rex*. Up in the Other Place, of course, Lord Archer need never fear the electors' judgement as he enjoys the reputed £15m that Rupert Murdoch's HarperCollins paid him for the next few doorstops of lacklustre prose and joint-the-dots plotting.

Among Commons newcomers and returnees with authorial form, earnest policy wonks prevail. In his new ministerial role, Frank Field can draw on 20 years of published reflections on the function and malfunction of the welfare state, from *To Him Who Hath* in 1976 through to his *Agenda for Britain* in 1993. Field snaffles the plaudits from all sides, but his backbench colleague Malcolm Wicks, once head of the Family Policy Studies Centre, showed an equally incisive grasp of the welfare labyrinth in his 1987 Penguin special *A Future for All*.

Applied social studies may languish in the universities, but they flourish mightily on New Labour's cramped beaches. Probably the most original take on the way we live now can be found in Patricia Hewitt's *About Time*, in which the new member for Leicester West tries to bridge the yawning gap between the actual rhythms of our lives and the anti-women – indeed, anti-human – time-schemes of the archaic institutions where we learn, work or

even legislate. With the theory behind her, now she can try the practical.

In keeping with the modernising waves of the past decade, this is all deeply sensible and sober stuff. It's a long time since Labour aspirants rushed into print with militant manifestos such as (say) the blood-curdling *Red Paper on Scotland* from 1975. And which Clyde-side wrecked edited that? Laddie name of Gordon Brown.

Then come the swollen ranks of Commons memoirists. (Though we should point out that Austin Mitchell's 1971 volume *The Yorkshire Joke* was not, in fact, an autobiography.) The heaviest ministerial apologies tend to weigh down bookshop shelves only after their authors have left the House (Norman Fowler's riveting recollections, by the way, sold around 3,000 hardback copies – even less than the average Tory vote on 1 May). So it's something of a rarity to find the boldest and funniest of all parliamentary tale-bearers – Alan Clark – back under the whip after his 1993 Diaries burnt every bridge and boat behind him.

Clark's leftist soul-brother, Ken Livingstone, offered a jovial canter through his life and thoughts in *It* voted changed anything, they'd abolish it. And the tea-driven archive machine in Tony Benn's Holland Park basement churns out a volume of endearingly Pooterish diaries every few years, with the help of his tireless editor Ruth Winstone. (Benn obliged his busier admirers with a one-volume abridgement in 1995.) A more waspish view of government at work comes from Gerald Kaufman's *How to Be a Minister* – droll advice that still reads well despite some antique beer-and-sandwiches yarns about industry policy in the 1970s. (Kaufman wears his other hat – a star-spangled Hollywood buff – in his charming study for the BFI Film Classics series of the Garland/Miramax musical, *Meet Me in St Louis*.) For first-hand tales of worse risks than a bad-tempered Sir Humphrey, one of the class of '97 trounces every rival: Tatton's stain-free Martin Bell, with his front-line chronicle in *Harvey's Way*.

With Roy Jenkins well and truly enshrined in the Lords, the Commons now lacks a serial political biographer. Several MPs, though, have managed one-off lives. Ian Delyell profiled Dick Crossman to good effect some years ago. In his days as a full-time (rather than a weekend) journalist, Rotherham's MP Denis MacShane traced the

Ayes down: ten surprisingly good reads by current MPs:

Martin Bell *In Harvey's Way* (1995)
Gerry Adams *Falls Memoirs* (1992)
Chris Mullin *A Very British Coup* (1982)
Gerald Kaufman *How to be a Minister* (1990; revised 1997)
Alan Clark *The Donkeys* (1991)
Alan Clark *Diaries* (1993)
Patricia Hewitt *About Time* (1993)
Tony Benn *The Benn Diaries* (1990-1995)
Peter Hain *The Peking Connection* (1995)
Gordon Brown and Tony Wright (eds) *Values, Visions and Voices* (1995)

No-Noes: ten tomes that their authors might prefer to forget:

Peter Lilley *Do You Sincerely Want to Win?* (1972)
Gordon Brown (ed) *The Red Paper on Scotland* (1975)
Peter Hain *Political Strides* (1986)
Austin Mitchell *New Zealand Politics in Action* (1982)
Austin Mitchell *Teach Thissen* (1983)
Patricia Hewitt *Your Rights at Work* (1978)
Tony Benn *The Regeneration of Britain* (1964)
John Redwood *Value-for-Money Audits* (1991)
Brian Sedgmore *Pitiless Pursuit* (1994)
Chris Mullin *How to Select or Reselect your MP* (1981)

"political odyssey" of François Mitterrand in 1981 with an optimism not quite borne out by subsequent events. More recently, Huddersfield's Barry Sheerman co-authored an impressive biography of Harold Laski, the intellectual engineer who helped to design the 1945 Labour landslide.

History itself has also fallen from the favour of literate MPs since the days when Lord Acton (before he decided that all power corrupts) sat behind Gladstone as an Irish Whig. But it still has a few elected practitioners. Before he declined into satellite chat-shows, a young political scientist called Austin Mitchell analysed *The Whigs in Opposition 1815-1830*. And, when John Redwood inhabited the distant planet of All Souls, he investigated belief and unbelief in Restoration culture under the title *Reason, Rhetoric and Religion*. The versatile Denis MacShane converted his doctoral thesis into a challenging study of *International Labour and the Origins of the Cold War*. However, the garland of Best Historian MP must fall on the unfairly advantaged shoulders of the Best Diarist, Alan Clark's four elegant volumes on campaigns of the First and Second World Wars (*The Donkeys*, *Barbarossa*, *Aces High* and *The Fall of Crete*) prove that his economical way with the actualities does not apply to the past.

Since 1979, scribbling MPs have tried in large numbers to re-define their party's "project" as the Tories triumphed and Labour re-grouped. On the left, Austin Mitchell promptly asked *Can Labour Win Again?* in 1979. Later, Giles Radice sought *Labour's Path to Power* – and events have shown that, by and large, he found it. Peter Hain made the revisionist case sound radical in *Ayes to the Left* as Tony Wright brought his academic background to bear on *Socialisms, Theories and Practices*. Most effectively, Peter Madselson (with Roger Liddle) famously wrote his own job description in *The Blair Revolution*, to emerge barely a year later as the Minister Without Limits.

In the blue corner, David "Two-Brains" Willetts made the case for *Modern Conservatism* while – when all already seemed lost – Alastair Duncan could still exorcise the state in a High Thatcherite vein with *Satan's Children*. The lady's high noon saw John Redwood bang the privatisation drum in *Popular Capitalism*. Given voters' reactions to that nostrum as applied to taps, trains and tubes, the next edition's title should surely be prefixed with an "U".

Most intriguing among the writing members are the handful of parliamentary novelists. Fiction failed to save Currie and Brandreth, but the electors of Shoreditch evidently do not hold Brian Sedgmore's trio of political

rumps against him (*Mr Secretary of State*, *Power Failure*, *Pitiless Pursuit*). Sunderland's Chris Mullin imagined a Very British Coup at a time when left-wingers such as him sincerely believed that the secret state would never allow such a thing as a 179-seat Labour majority to happen again. Yet it stands up well as fiction (and looked great on TV). However, the Government will not be hoping for a swift re-run of Mullin's 1981 pamphlet "How to Select or Reselect your MP". Mullin later used the political thriller to explore his Asian interests in *The Year of the Fire Monkey*; and Peter Hain hitched a ride on this post-Graham Greene bandwagon with *The Peking Connection*.

None of these tales is less than competent, although Douglas Hurd in his pre-FO days wrote this brand of thriller rather better. They certainly leave Disraeli's mantle as statesman-avenger unoccupied. The current batch of MP-novelists can spin a diverting yarn around politics at home or abroad, but their skill or sympathy does not seem to stretch much further. And that, of course, sums up the limits of our system as a whole. Politics in Britain can turn out effective historians, diarists and even theorists by the score. But literary talent as such fails to thrive in the House.

That absence marks a more general estrangement of Westminster from the creative arts. In this climate, a figure of world-class distinction such as Glenda Jackson has to play down her achievements in order to get ahead. Yet the arts have contributed almost everything to the feel-good factor in British culture now, which besotted plodders of all parties are so keen to exploit.

Will things change? The omens do not look that promising. One of Labour's noisiest first steps has been to channel proceeds from the mid-week lottery away from the arts and into keep-fit classes: a "populist" measure that shows some contempt for the old left-liberal mission to make the best culture popular. The House still gives a safe, congenial home to analysts and reporters of all types – the kind of mind that synthesises and interprets, rather than creates anew. Bards, visionaries and artists had better stay away. A slogan on Parisian walls in 1968 demanded "All power to the imagination". Not here, not now, and probably not ever. The writer is Literary Editor of *The Independent*.

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THE FIVE-SECTION INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY. IT IS ... ARE YOU?

Those tricky questions answered at last

Every newspaper has to have an expert on the vagaries of language these days, and this column is proud to offer the services of Professor Wordsmith, who on his day – and when sober – is equal to the challenge of any enquiry about vocabulary or grammar. He is back again today to field the fiercest problem you can throw at him. All yours, Professor!

I have noticed that when people start reading a magazine these days, they first shake it automatically to get rid of all the inserts and free offers lingering in its pages. Has anyone coined a word for this activity?

Professor Wordsmith writes: I don't think so. I may be wrong, of course. I have noticed a new trend which seems so far not to have attracted a new name. For many years pubs and cafés have been in the habit of putting a blackboard outside with the dishes of the day chalked on it, or perhaps details of a forthcoming pub quiz night. The chalk often wears off or is removed by rain, and perhaps for this reason people have now taken to writing or even painting the

message on the blackboard in coloured script which is designed to make it look as if it is actually chalked on. Nobody has ever mentioned this trend – a trend which I find rather regrettable, as I like the old chalked messages – presumably because they do not know the name for this process of painting in the style of chalking. Is there in fact such a word?

Professor Wordsmith writes: Not so far as I know.

You would think by now that pronunciation of words in modern English would be standardised, but I still come across words which can be pronounced in two different ways, both of which seem to be correct. For instance, you hear the word "macho" pronounced "mach-o", which is obviously correct as it is a Spanish word and that is the Spanish way of saying it, but so many people say the incorrect "makko" that it is just becoming an accepted alternative. Again, I have noticed that although I pronounce "clematis" with a stress on the first syllable, CLEmatis, many of my friends prefer to say clemATis, which you might write down



Miles Kingston

as "clem-eh-tis". Even well-known names seem to vary. I have heard Angus Dayton's name pronounced both as Deeton and as Dayton. But which is correct?

Professor Wordsmith writes: I am sorry. Who is Angus Dayton?

Every time the matter of devolution comes up, we hear a reference to the West Lothian question. But what is the West Lothian question? Professor Wordsmith writes: I have no idea. Unless the question is simply, "Where is West Lothian?"

Ah. So where IS West Lothian?

Professor Wordsmith writes: I am not entirely sure.

The West Lothian Question is always mentioned as if it applied to all forms of devolution. But surely there must be a specifically Welsh version of this. I mean, it must be demarcating the Welsh to have to make do with the West Lothian Question. Do the Welsh not have a Question of their own?

Professor Wordsmith writes: I am sure they do. But what it is I have no idea.

I have recently noticed in several railway stations a poster urging businesses to advertise on station sites, and the poster uses this intriguing slogan: "A 7-minute dwell time at rail stations means more effective advertising..." Now, "dwell time" is a completely new expression to me. I can see roughly what it means. But does it mean that today's train passenger is known to wait an average of seven minutes for his train. OR that the average train waits for seven minutes when it arrives, before departing? And what, by the way, is the difference between a railway

station and a rail station?

Professor Wordsmith writes: Your guess is as good as mine.

When it comes to naming the date before and after Christ's birth, there seems to be no consistency at all. We in Britain say AD (Anno Domini) for after and BC (Before Christ) for before – in other words, we use one Latin and one English expression. The Italians stick to Italian and say "ante Christo" and "dopo Christo", which abbreviates slightly unfortunately to ACDC. The French do not have an abbreviation at all. Well, they write "av-J-C" and "ap-J-C", but this is only a written abbreviation, as when they say it they say "avant Jesus-Christ" in full. Only the Germans seem to be logical, as they stick to Latin for both, and say "Anno Domini" and "Ante Christum", though this latter again abbreviates slightly clumsily to "A Ch". Do you think Brussels will manage to sort out this minefield before the millennium, and that as well as a single currency we will join a single year-measure? Professor Wordsmith writes: All things are possible. Keep those questions for Professor Wordsmith rolling in!

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There may be no profit in human rights...

...but demands for ethical auditing will not go away, says Jack O'Sullivan

Shell is probably one of world's most enlightened multinationals. Its PR people proudly champion a recent award from the *Financial Times* for "Europe's most respected firm". But that's not the image most people have. The public remembers Shell for trying to dump the Brent Spar oil platform in the north Atlantic. And we know the company still profits from oil production in Nigeria, long after the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa who accused the company of colluding in the alleged environmental destruction of oil-rich Ogoniland.

Yesterday's row at Shell's AGM just makes matters worse. Shell's top brass fought off demands from a minority of shareholders that its business practices should be examined from now on by outsiders. Such lack of openness leaves a nasty smell - if this company is so clean, how come we can't look inside Planet Shell?

But is all this fair criticism? Last year the company, wounded by criticism, called in Integrity Works, a business ethics consultancy, to help clean itself up. After a year-long study, involving hundreds of senior managers and enough energy to reverse an oil tanker, Shell agreed in a new mission statement to "respect human rights". Each Shell company must now sign a letter annually saying how it will achieve this goal in the local context.

For Shell this is big news, given that business normally leaves morality to the clergy. John Drummond of Integrity Works recalls one manager's shock at his new role. "He said that he sometimes feels like he's in a Western movie. He's just walked into town and someone has given him the sheriff's badge, telling him to round up a posse to catch the bad guys. Then, immediately after the gun fight, they want the star back because they don't trust him with it. In other words, he's getting all sorts of contradictory signals from the public."

Shell seems genuinely serious about morality - just as Labour sounds serious about putting "good" back into Britain's foreign policy. Following Robin Cook's commitment this week to setting a high moral tone for relations with other countries, the worlds of Mammon and Machiavelli are moving in the same direction. But like Mr Cook, the company can't quite understand why we're unimpressed; why, at yesterday's AGM, loud voices called for more.

Business people and politicians still do not see that people have grown so cynical that high-minded principles are

no longer enough. We want to know what all this means in practice. Will Robin Cook let his scruples mean the loss of jobs in the arms industry? Answer unclear. Will he take sanctions against companies that use child slave labour? Answer equivocal. Will Shell let outsiders check out whether the company has really been keeping its promises to honour human rights? No. There's the crux of the problem. If you can't prove what you say, people won't trust you.

It is easy to understand why Shell prefers to operate in private. The alternative invites catastrophe. Who could Shell trust to sit in judgement on its operations? Greenpeace, which got its case so wrong over the Brent Spar that it cost Shell millions in lost sales at the petrol pumps? And who is entitled to define human rights, a fluid notion that seems to change according to the culture and country you are in? No company boss wants to find his organisation rated in an ethical league table.

The discerning chief executive need look no further than the experience of the Body Shop to get the jitters. Anita Roddick's company, so careful in its ethical practices, has nonetheless been subject to minute and damaging scrutiny in the media. After that, which company director, aware of his own venality, would let a bunch of do-gooders loose on the company records?

Shell executives know all of this. They take comfort in their oft-repeated mantra that it has taken 500 years to agree the accountability rules for external financial auditing. It is bound to take a long time to agree upon the ground rules for such modern concepts as "environmental and ethical auditing". Better, then, to wait a while - certainly until those individuals are well into retirement.

But they are mistaken. The world will not wait until ethical auditing has developed into the fine art practised by financial auditors. Next year, the clamour for outside inspection will grow a little louder and unless solid proof is forthcoming, human rights pledges will ring more hollow. Companies such as Shell will have to agree criteria quickly about who will judge them on what. Consumers may be more sophisticated, less easily duped by ill-informed pressure groups. But, after yesterday, the danger remains that when the next scandal breaks, Shell's reputation will still be prey to any organisation - tipnot or reputable - that can steal the headlines.

Talk tough, but carry a small stick

by Polly Toynbee

When the Home Secretary speaks, his word is law. The judges hearken to his tone and amend their sentencing policy with alacrity. Others too hang upon his every phrase for guidance. In this, Jack Straw's first ministerial newspaper interview, the awesomeness of his office seemed suddenly to weigh heavily upon his shoulders. In his vast office (was it exorcised of its previous dark tenant by some prison chaplain?), there we sat with his two chaperones, my tape recorder head-to-head with theirs, so unlike relaxed interviews in his old cramped office. Picking his way with furrowed brow, he chose his words, at times, with painful deliberation.

For symbolism is the name of the game and in his first 10 days great symbols have indeed rung out from his office. First, he declared the most radical constitutional reform of our era - the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into British law: citizens will now have a fundamental check on parliamentary autocracy. Then he announced he would take full responsibility for the prisons - no more Howard-like ducking and weaving about what is policy and what is operational. He announced a new specific crime of racial harassment. He froze all the asylum deportations that were being rushed through and, a good small symbol this, he let the Nepalese adopted son of a millionaire stay.

Not bad. But it will not be enough to satisfy the most idealistic of the many reform lobbies. "Please," said one to me before this interview, "tell him to be nice. The war with Howard is over and he has won it, devastatingly. He doesn't need to speak about punishment all the time. It's time to move on." I convey the message, and Straw grins: "We'll see." And they should wait and see before they rush to judgement. For he will still talk the tough language of punishment, because he means it. But his plans for the criminal justice system, already worked out in the fine detail, are equally about prevention and cure.

We begin with crisis in the prisons. A week before the election, prison numbers topped 60,000, the highest ever: overcrowding has demolished every good initiative to treat, train or rehabilitate. Will he do what Douglas Hurd did in the late Eighties, releasing 2,000 petty offenders at the tail end of short sentences? On those criteria, 6,000 could now be released, saving some £150m.

Straw says his first nasty shock was to find that prison numbers were rising far faster than the projections Howard had announced.



Home Secretary Jack Straw gives his first newspaper interview

So he picks his words with extreme care: "I don't think getting the prison population down in the short term is even remotely possible. It's about containing the rise while maintaining public safety." How will he do that? First he will reduce the 20 per cent of prisoners who are on remand, by cutting court delays with mandatory time-limits, as in Scotland. Then he will get the Court of Appeal to set sentencing guidelines: "Crown Court judges are using far more custodial sentences than they did, and they lack any collective memory of the crucial decisions they make. Published sentencing guidelines will allow public discussion and understanding of the system." Next, with extra deliberation, these words: "For many non-violent offenders, it would be more sensible to punish them in the community." That is what the judges and magistrates need to hear. When Howard belatedly "Prison works!" they jumped to it - so now hear this: community sentences work!

But what about Hurd's executive releases? Will there be a Straw amnesty? No. "Hurd didn't take public opinion with him. He did it at a time of rapidly rising crime and the public thought he had no serious crime-prevention policy." The pressure on judges to give longer sentences sprang, he concedes, "from the political climate created by both sides of the House." But

now he wants to build public confidence in community sentences. "The language we use to describe it matters. We must use the language of punishment. If we only talk of diversion from prison and excuses for criminals, then public demand for prison will continue." He points to the disastrous statistics of the last few years - crime up by 50 per cent, convictions down by 50 per cent, yet prisons are 50 per cent fuller. Catching people and sentencing them to punishment is what matters most, he says. "Sanctions do work, but you have to build public confidence that punishment also happens in the community."

Amongst cartoonists, Straw is already the children's bogeyman - putting them in chain gangs, sending them to bed early, the beat with the cane straight out of *Beano*. Nipping young criminals in the bud is his big idea, the thing he cares about most passionately - but it will be a fiendishly difficult project, embracing every aspect of a child's life.

How will it work? There will be beefed-up Young Offender Teams in every area. On first offence, a child will get a final stern warning, administered by the police. They will be made to write a letter of apology to the victim or to apologise to the victim in person: "The youth justice system is stuck in a

time warp. Youngsters inhabit a culture of excuse and they don't think anyone is a victim but themselves." On a second offence, the new fast track means strict legal time limits on handling cases: "No more delays waiting for case conferences, stuck in tangle, kids' futures left in pending trays in social services departments." He says £1bn a year is spent on a useless legal processing of young criminals, with an average of three adjournments per case, and then nothing happens. There will be no more conditional discharges, but fines and reparation orders, making them pay for their crimes.

That is the punishment bit, the easy part. But then come the magic and expensive words "intensive supervision". "We will ask what the kid does all day, if they're out late at night, or not at school," and they will be served Action Plan Orders. Can Straw make an Order easily written on paper into a reality in a child's life, with effective and constructive supervision?

Few doubt that someone urgently needs to get a grip on out-of-control wild children, often from catastrophic families, beyond reach of school or courts. But it will be hard to deliver, for it crosses lines from probation to social services, schools and police. It crosses budgets too. Can he be sure savings on the Lord Chancellor's costs will flow back into the project? Straw

rightly identifies vast sums awash and wasted in the system, from courtroom to prison, but it will not be easy to get his hands on it. And forcing departments to work together on the ground will be the ultimate test of Cardinal Richelieu Mandelson's brief to make such inter-departmental schemes happen.

What kind of Home Secretary will Jack Straw be? Pragmatic, certainly, but no cynical crowd-pleaser. His pragmatism ensures a cool assessment of what really works, based on hard evidence, the programmes that genuinely reduce re-offending both in and out of prison. Some liberal nerve-endings will twitch, because he does believe in punishment. But he has lived with the loathing of liberals for a while now. Taking public opinion along with him matters rather more, as he knows he can do little without it.

This job tests character, sometimes to destruction, with its multitude of explosive liabilities - police, immigration, terrorism, prisons and much more. That means a Home Secretary's gut instinct is often as important as his well-laid plans. Which way will he jump in a crisis?

Judging by his first symbolic acts, inspecting what he really wants to achieve, I suspect his instincts are largely all in the right place.

If you bug someone's conversations it seems rather pointless to tell them about it later

john walsh



Boy Wonder Hague: when he had hair on top

Leafing through my back copies of *Isis*, the Oxford University students' magazine, I noticed a prescient piece of writing from October 1981. It's the "Isis Idol" column, a slot that was once reserved for the chic, witty, the bold, the talented or the glamorously doomed. Once, people like Kenneth Tynan were *Isis* Idols. In October 1981, it was the turn of William Hague.

The precocious-but-wizened Hague, currently favourite to lead the Tory party to electoral glory at some unspecified future date, was of course already known to Conservative futurologists when he went up to Oxford, because of his broken-voiced intervention at a Tory party conference when he was still a teenager. But the *Isis* article - by "David Taylor" later to metamorphose as D J Taylor, the critic, novelist and biographer of Thatcher - offers a fascinating snapshot of the university's Conservative Association. Of the university's Young Pretender, a leading light of the university's Conservative Association, laying out their manifesto from his rooms at Magdalen (where a book called *The Pursuit of Power* has pride of place on his shelves) and radiating ordinariness, reasonableness and patience - a commonplace young-politician-in-the-making. Undisturbed by liberal and reform-minded factions, "William shakes his head, gives them his brisk homily on party loyalty, snags in the knowledge that in the end there will still be a Tory party, whatever the tribulations of his dog days, and a nook in it for diehards like himself." How times have changed, not. "Hague is inexorable," Taylor concludes in awestruck tones. "Who knows what he will or will not do?" One thing he will do, however, is suggested by an unusual revelation: that Hague once secretly taped-recorded the dinner conversation of an executive member of the Conservative

Association whom he suspected of disloyalty. But even this Nixonian manoeuvre seems to have shown the Boy Wonder in a good light. "If you are going to bug someone's conversations," says Taylor acidly, "...it seems rather pointless to tell them about it afterwards."

Strolling last weekend through Menton, the Eastbourne of the Côte d'Azur, I was pulled up short by an advertisement in the window of a chemist's shop. Above a picture of a shaggy-out-looking girl student in Brains Specs, resting her head in her hands and surrounded by towering piles of revision books, a headline reads "Cognium - un médicament contre la fatigue intellectuelle." Only the French would have the execrable taste to borrow Descartes's most famous dictum from *Le Discours de la Méthode* - "Cogito, ergo sum" - and truncate the words into a name that sounds like a cure for diarrhoea ("Cognium - for your dodgy tum"). But then only the French would allude so airily to "intellectual fatigue" as if it were a condition like a pulled hamstring. One tries to imagine Jean-Baptiste, after another gruelling afternoon spent trying to synthesise dollars, *Marcel Marceau* and *The Rite of Spring* into a single postmodernist braid, ringing up Bernard-Henri Lévy for Marguerite Duras and saying, "Sacrebleu, I am intellectually knackered. 'Ave you a blister pack of Cognium I can borrow...?"

A closer look at the girl student in the advertisement reveals an odd thing. The books that are piled up on either side of her aching head are a run collection indeed. You'd almost imagine they'd been hoicked off a shelf in someone's living room rather than found in a college library. There's a grim-

looking business tome called *Commercial Correspondence*, a vast medical textbook, a coffee-table volume of photographs called *Famille 2000*, an *Histoire d'Allemagne*, a Penguin novel and another picture book called *Making Miniature*.

Frankly, if they are expected to revise for exams in literature, biology, sociology, business management and domestic handicraft, simultaneously and in two languages, it's no wonder French students turn out so odd.

President Clinton is a sufficiently shrewd man to know how to avoid political banana skins.

So it seems a little foolish of him to have run splat into the biggest banana-shaped controversy of the modern world. This is not, you'll be amazed to hear, the unending dispute between Brussels and the British tabloid press about how only nine-inch bananas with freckles and zips on them will, henceforth, be deemed saleable in the European Union. This is the other banana dispute, out in the Caribbean. For many of the island countries, the squishy yellow phallus is as crucial to their economies as the humble potato once was to Irish subsistence farmers.

And now Mr Clinton is trying, through the World Trade Organisation, to block an agreement that guarantees Caribbean farmers a share of the EU market. "For many of our countries, bananas are to us what cars are to Detroit," said the Jamaican PM. And in the future, they suspect, Clinton is hoping that Europe will get more of its bananas from South America.

I mention this riveting piece of geopolitical flanging because the hapless, banana-centric Caribbean has found a fan and a spokeswoman from an unusual source. Step forward, Glensy Kinnock, MEP for South Wales East and scourge of quota-busters

everywhere. In an as-yet-unpublished article, the wife of the former Labour leader hints darkly that President Clinton is in deep cahoots with the South American banana-trading Chiquita organisation; that in return for Clinton's recommending them to the World Trade Organisation, the Chiquita boss, Carl Linden, shovelled half a million dollars into Democrat campaign funds. In return for which, Mrs Kinnock suspiciously notes, "Linden subsequently had coffee with President Clinton and slept over in Lincoln's bedroom." I think that clinches it. She herself has recently been to the Windward Islands, she reveals, for a close, fact-finding look at the locals' plight. She even refers to the whole bendy-fruit imbroglio as "Banannagate".

Blimey. Should Glensy ever tire of the European Parliament, she has a fine future as an investigative journalist. In the meantime, I hope the citizens of South Wales East, not itself a conspicuously large banana-growing region, feel they are being appropriately represented by their glamorous MEP.

It's one of those tricky social minefields that no amount of etiquette books will help you out of. You are on the phone to someone and suddenly decide you want to go and do something else. But how to get them off the phone without seeming rude? Only an inspired excuse will do. So I must take my hat off to Harold Evans, former editor of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, now running Random House US and clearly a man of phenomenal social skills. A colleague of mine was on the phone to Evans earlier this week. Their conversation was terminated thus: "Sorry, I've got to ring off now. I've got Chris Reeve on the other line and he's, you know, on a life support machine..."



Fruit champion: Glensy Kinnock and a banana

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for seven yearsDiane Coyle
Economics Editor

The number of people claiming unemployment benefit fell sharply in April to the lowest for seven years. The drop of 59,400 took the total to 1.65 million, or 5.9 per cent of the labour force.

But the Government, which in opposition criticised the jobless figures as "fiddled", welcomed an announcement by the Office for National Statistics yesterday that it would review them. The recent sharp falls in the headline total have been exaggerated by the introduction of the Job Seekers' Allowance last October.

Safeway to hire
8,000 more staff

Safeway, Britain's fourth-largest supermarket group, is to create 8,000 jobs over the next two years as it opens stores and extends customer service programmes. Most of the jobs will be in new stores, with Safeway planning to open 17 supermarkets this year, writes Nigel Cope.

The total also includes 1,600 jobs in existing stores as the company expands its Queue-busters campaign and the Shop 'n' Go self-scanning scheme which is being extended from 117 to 165 stores this year. The announcement comes two years after Safeway cut 4,000 jobs as part of its Safeway 2000 programme to improve efficiency.

Colin Smith, Safeway's chief executive, said the introduction of a minimum wage would only affect the company if it was fixed at more than £3.80 an hour, which is Safeway's lowest rate. A minimum of £4 an hour would cost the company £4m a year, he said.

Other figures yesterday suggested wage pressures were not quite as severe as many economists feared. The rate of underlying average earnings growth was 4.5 per cent in March, the same as February's rate which was revised down by half a percentage point.

The Bank of England indicated, on the publication of its Inflation Report earlier this week, that 4.5 per cent pay growth was barely compatible with hitting the inflation target in the longer term.

Economists agreed that yesterday's figures indicated the labour market was getting

tighter, but differed in their assessment of the inflationary dangers.

James Barty, of Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, said: "With unemployment continuing its rapid decline and the surveys beginning to show labour shortages, there is good reason to be concerned about the outlook for earnings." But John O'Sullivan at NatWest Markets said pay inflation was unlikely to rise above the 4.5 per cent threshold.

Earnings, like other economic statistics, reflect the diverging fortunes of manufacturing and services. The underlying growth rate in manufacturing has edged up from 4.5 per cent in March 1996 to 4.75 per cent, but the figure in services has climbed from 3.5 per cent to 4.75 per cent.

Bonuses in sectors such as financial services have been 30 per cent higher this year than last. Claimant unemployment fell for both sexes, all ages, all regions and at all durations last month. The number of the unemployed aged under 25 fell to 421,700, their lowest proportion of the total on record.

Just over one-third of the total, 616,500, have been unemployed for more than a year.

The Employment Minister Andrew Smith said: "Unemployment is falling, but there are still far too many people without jobs and skills. We cannot accept unemployment at these levels."

The Office for National Statistics said it was reviewing the unemployment statistics in the light of increasing interest in alternative measures. Last year ministers decided against introducing a monthly survey of unemployment because of the £8m-£10m cost.

The ONS will consult widely over whether it should in fact be introduced, or whether to opt for a monthly figure derived from the existing quarterly survey, at a cost of about £250,000. Many experts would prefer the dearer alternative.

Ruth Lea of the Institute of Directors said: "How important are the unemployment figures as a measure of the economy? If they are important, there is a good case for putting more money into them."

Separate figures in yesterday's batch showed that employment in manufacturing dipped by 3,000 in March. The level has been broadly flat for about 15 months.

The number of vacancies at JobCentres increased slightly to a new record of 275,600. The ratio of vacancies to unemployment, a favoured measure of tightness in the jobs market, is well above its 1989 peak.

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Rebel shareholders claim partial success in securing environmental accountability

Devil's advocate: Pressure groups at yesterday's agm forced Shell shareholders to run the gamut outside the QEL Centre in Westminster
Photograph: Ben SchottShell defeats
Pirc's call
for openness

Magnus Grimond

Pressure groups hailing Shell over its human rights and environmental records yesterday claimed partial victory despite being massively defeated in an attempt to open up the multinational group's practices to outside review.

A shareholders' resolution backed by Pirc, the corporate governance consultancy, and Friends of the Earth to force Shell to establish an independent audit of its environmental and human rights policies was defeated by a margin of around eight to one following the annual meeting in London.

But the protesters, who claim Shell is implicated in the deaths of 2,000 people in the Ogoni region of Nigeria and widespread pollution, hailed a concession by the group's outgoing chairman, John Jennings, that he accepted the principle of independent verification.

Calling for shareholders to trust Mr Jennings said Shell had for 20 years operated under a set of "clear, open and published principles" and "procedures in these matters" drawn up by Sir Geoffrey Chandler, a former Shell executive now supporting the protest movement. Mr Jennings, due to retire next month, said the directors shared the concerns of the resolution and admitted there was "great value" in having its practices externally verified. There was a problem in auditing policies as opposed to actions, he said. "We are searching for that process. Some [group] companies are more advanced than others, the process is in its infancy."

Shell UK is today due to publish its first health, safety and environment report following on the heels of a recent group-wide HSE report. Over the next two years every group company would implement internationally recognised standards in these areas, Mr Jennings said.

He was speaking after a hotly-contested, but gentlemanly debate initiated by Canon Christopher Hall of the Oxford Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility. In a passionate plea to shareholders who packed the Queen Elizabeth 2 conference centre a stone's throw from where Parliament was reassembling in Westminster yesterday, Canon Hall said they were not attacking the company but supporting the rights of human beings the world over.

It was a demand which he said was supported from his prison cell by Ken Saro-Wiwa, the activist who was executed fighting for the rights of the people of the Ogoni region of Nigeria where Shell is alleged to be abetting the Nigerian military government.

Later, Canon Hall said the company had moved its position, but they had not received a full answer yesterday. "A sledgehammer has been used to crack a very small nut in the shape of this resolution. But this acorn has taken root and the landscape will be transformed," he added.

Anne Simpson of Pirc, who seconded the motion, was more positive. Shell had accepted three of the five points in their resolution and it had moved its ground on outside verification. "They have accepted its desirability; it's just a question of when and how."

Earlier, she said the annual meeting was the first where issues such as these had been addressed. Environmental issues were at the heart of Shell's business. She called for international benchmarking of environmental standards and for them to be independently audited, highlighting Ernst & Young's audit at BP. "We are moving from 'trust me' to 'show me world' she said."

The wide-ranging debate also took in the price of petrol in the Western Isles.

'Superwoman' makes City comeback

Tom Stevenson
Financial Editor

Superwoman is back. Nicola Horlick, the £1m-a-year mother-of-five fund manager who flied out of Morgan Grenfell Asset Management in January, is almost certain to join a new London investment management house being set up by French giant Société Générale.

She will work with John Richards, the 36-year-old head of UK institutional investment at Mercury Asset Management

whose appointment was announced yesterday.

The appointment of Ms Horlick so soon after her high-profile departure from MGAM raised eyebrows in the City yesterday. The public spat between Ms Horlick and her previous employer was seen as extremely damaging to the reputation of the City and the bank, but especially to her.

Although the terms of her contract are still being discussed, Patrick Pagni, chief executive of SocGen's embryonic

London operation, said yesterday: "Prospects are reasonably favourable she will join."

He said he had not been put off by the style of her departure from MGAM: "We are confident she will not put off potential fund managers or potential clients. She is a highly respectable woman."

Mr Pagni said Mr Richards, one of the most senior managers at MAM, had been given a brief to build up a meaningful presence in London for SocGen, where it has no fund manage-

ment operation. In France, Société Générale is the leading asset management business with about 10 per cent of the mainly bond-driven institutional investment market.

Philippe Collas, chairman and chief executive of SGAM, said: "The asset management market has seen unprecedented growth in the 1990s. We look forward to building a team with the skills and experience to develop a major asset management presence for SocGen in the UK market."

Spokesmen for MAM and Morgan Grenfell played down fears that SocGen was poised to poach its best fund managers.

The appointment of Mr Richards and Ms Horlick reunites the two 14 years after they started their City careers at MAM as graduate trainees. Equally successful, they have very different profiles after Ms Horlick was suspended then resigned from MGAM, accused of attempting to poach a team to defect to rival ABN Amro Hoare Govett.

Liddell reads riot act to insurance chiefs

Nic Cicutti
Personal Finance Editor

Helen Liddell, the new Treasury Minister, read the riot act to leaders of the UK's top insurance companies yesterday, threatening to "name and shame" any that failed to offer swift compensation to victims of the pension transfer scandal.

The Minister told executives of the 28 worst offending companies that continuing delays in offering redress to those who were mis-sold personal pensions were "completely unacceptable".

During a terse 20-minute meeting, Mrs Liddell added that continuing lack of com-

mitment on the part of insurance companies would result in far tougher regulations being introduced as part of the Government's financial services industry.

Mrs Liddell, who was flanked during the meeting by Colette Bowe, chief executive of the Personal Investment Authority, the frontline financial regulator, said she fully backed the PIA's latest deadline announced on Tuesday for compensating victims of the scandal.

But Mrs Liddell added that she expected most firms to settle their cases well before the new target for all urgent cases to be resolved by the end of December 1998.

The Minister said: "Investment firms have seriously underestimated the depth of public anger about this. It is the ordinary man or woman in the street who is being hurt by their foot-dragging."

"The Government is clear that this dilatory behaviour is unacceptable. It will not be tolerated. Let there be no misunderstanding. Failure to deliver them will have serious consequences for the industry."

Mrs Liddell's unprecedented summoning of insurance industry leaders follows growing anger among consumer organisations and trade unions at delays in dealing with the problem. The review follows a report

in November 1994 from the Securities and Investments Board, the City's leading regulator, which said up to 1.5 million people may have been mis-sold a personal pension.

Of these, the SIB said, some 500,000 were urgent cases because those affected were already retired, close to it or were among categories most likely to have suffered heavy financial losses.

The Personal Investment Authority originally set a target of December 1995 for the most urgent cases to be dealt with. But its regular pronouncements on pension compensation have been ignored by most companies involved.

Figures released on Tuesday by the FIA showed that barely 10 per cent of urgent cases had been dealt with and compensation offered to just 20,000 people. Some of the UK's best-known insurers, which include Britannia and Royal Insurance, are among the slowest in offering redress to clients.

Mrs Liddell's intervention was yesterday being seen by senior regulatory sources as a sign that ministers had finally lost patience with insurance companies and with the PIA. An industry source said the "name and shame" policy was considered by Ms Bowe at the PIA last year - and then rejected, supposedly on legal grounds.



Name and shame: Helen Liddell is losing patience

Sugen takes
second shot at
UK flotation

Sameena Ahmad

Sugen, the biotechnology company 20 per cent owned by Zeneca, plans to float on the stock market this summer valued at around \$150m (£92m). This is the group's second shot at a UK listing.

The California-based Sugen, which already has a quote on the US's Nasdaq exchange, deferred plans to float last year following a slump in UK biotechnology prices. However, recently revived confidence in the sector could herald a stream of biotech flotations over the next two years.

One flotation in the pipeline is Biovector Therapeutics, the French drug delivery company. It said yesterday it hoped to raise around \$50m in a flotation in the UK or on Europe's Easdaq market early next year, a move that would value the group at around \$150m. Biovector, which this month announced a tie-up with US group Biochem Pharma to develop an influenza vaccine, has appointed Dresdner Kleinwort Benson as advisers.

Sugen, which specialises in developing cancer drugs, does not plan to raise new money when it launches in the UK. Speaking at a biotechnology

conference hosted by Rothschild in London yesterday, Stephen Evans-Freke, Sugen's founder and chief executive, said: "Our share price in the US does not make fund-raising sensible at this point."

"We want to reach a broader audience of European investors. We know many who are keen to take a position, but they are restricted at the moment."

Mr Evans-Freke said Sugen now had a lower risk profile after successfully taking its most advanced drug for brain cancer into late-stage clinical trials. "The time is right for us in the UK," he said.

British-born Mr Evans-Freke, who owns 5 per cent of the company, moved to the US where he sold his first biotechnology start-up, Selektide, to the Marion Merrell Dow drug giant, now part of Hoechst, for \$58m in 1994. He founded Sugen in 1990, floating it on Nasdaq four years later.

After Zeneca, which invested \$33m for its 20 per cent share, Sugen's second-largest shareholder is Rothschild's venture capital arm, Biotechnology Investments, which owns 6 per cent. Jeremy Curnock Cook, a director of Biotechnology Investments, took a seat on Sugen's board in January.

STOCK MARKETS									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	Yield (%)	Index	Close	Day's change
FTSE 100	4696.90	-4.10	-0.1	4691.00	4056.50	3.47	Nikkei	7600	-100
FTSE 250	4529.30	-3.70	-0.1	4729.40	4469.40	3.58		7200	-100
FTSE 350	2269.70	-1.90	-0.1	2271.60	2017.90	3.49		7100	-100
FTSE SmallCap	2316.80	-1.01	-0.0	2374.20	2178.29	3.02		7000	-100
FTSE All-Share	2228.79	-1.87	-0.1	2230.66	1988.78	3.45		6900	-100
New York	7315.83	+41.62	+0.6	7292.75	5032.94	1.71		6800	-100
Tokyo	20209.72	+80.61	+0.4	20209.72	17302.85	0.81		6700	-100
Hong Kong	14153.58	+247.12	+1.8	14153.58	12055.17	3.08		6600	-100
Frankfurt	3573.69	-21.46	-0.6	3565.15	2946.77	1.51		6500	-100

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES									
Money Market Rates					Bond Yields				
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year
UK	6.28	6.88	6.95	7.99	7.01	8.08			
US	5.53	6.28	6.84	5.42	6.87	6.86			
Japan	0.41	0.88	2.54	2.46	-	-			
Germany	3.13	3.31	5.68	6.42	6.44	-			

CURRENCIES									
Pound					Dollar				
Index	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago	Index	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago	Index	Yesterday
\$ (London)	1.5405	+0.0005	1.5153	£ (London)	0.6508	-0.0002	0.6589	¥ (London)	160.00
\$ (NY)	1.5435	+0.0005	1.5151	£ (NY)	0.6505	-0.0002	0.6600	¥ (NY)	160.00
DM (London)	2.7888	+0.0101	2.2287	DM (London)	1.7006	+0.0001	1.5368	DM (NY)	160.00
¥ (London)	154.112	-0.0004	150.546	¥ (London)	118.325	-0.0005	105.860	¥ (NY)	160.00
£ Index	99.3	+0.5	84.7	£ Index	103.1	-0.3	85.7	£ Index	160.00

MAIN PRICE CHANGES									
Index	Price (p)	Change (p)	Change (%)	Index	Price (p)	Change (p)	Change (%)	Index	Price (p)
Safeway	384.5	23.5	6.1	De LA Riv	501	26.5	5.0	Gold S	348.35
T & N	137	8.5	6.0	NFC	132	6	4.3	Gold £	212.34
Medeva	285	14.5	5.3	Paripolus	2707.5	112.5	4.0	Base Rates	-6.25pc

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'Lord Borrie is reviewing competition policy and may recommend that the public interest test needs modification. By all means widen it to include other issues but do not reverse it. That would be a disaster'.

Politicians should not get more power to meddle

While it was in opposition, Labour was on the whole against the free-wheeling, deal-hungry ways of the City. Mergers, it believed, were damaging employment and investment in the British economy. It therefore devised a plan to block hostile takeovers by reversing the burden of proof so that bidders would have to demonstrate that a takeover was in the public interest.

But that was Old Labour and this is New. Now that it has the burden of office to carry on its shoulders, Labour looks to be less keen on the idea. There was no mention yesterday of such a measure being in the Competition Bill when it is published this autumn. If it is slipped in between now and then, the Queen might have a case to answer under the Trade Descriptions Act.

Nevertheless, the concept is clearly still knocking around and commands some support – not least from the President of the Board of Trade, Margaret Beckett, who first proposed it. Just in case she should be tempted to dust it down at a later stage, here are a few reasons why it would be an extremely dangerous measure.

First, and most objectionably, it would remove the ability of shareholders to decide whether their company was performing satisfactorily and conversely give far too much power and discretion to politicians and regulators. Freeing managers from the threat of unwanted takeover also frees them from the incentive to maximise shareholder return.

Blocking a takeover on the basis of whether it is against the public interest – the present test – is not perfect but at least it is objectively based and, rightly, designed to catch those mergers which reduce competition.

Allowing a Secretary of State to decide the point at which a takeover actively promotes the public interest would give politicians carte blanche to meddle in the markets. Already they have too much discretion in determining competition policy. Few would want them to get more.

Second, the implication that only hostile mergers operate against the public interest is a fallacy. A merger is just as likely to be motivated by the self-interest of the two parties if it is agreed. Indeed, if anything, it is more likely to be a conspiracy against the public in these circumstances. If the burden of proof were reversed only for hostile mergers between Guinness and GrandMet. Just because Tony Greener and George Bull think it a good idea to get together does not automatically mean GMG Brands is in the public interest.

Third, such a measure would in any case miss the largest and most contentious mergers where there is greatest scope for abuse of the public interest, since these would still pass automatically to Brussels for examination.

Lord Borrie is reviewing competition policy for Mrs Beckett at the moment and may recommend that the public interest test

needs modification. By all means widen it to include issues other than pure competition concerns. But do not reverse it. That would be a disaster for Britain's competitiveness.

Pressure groups have their uses

Perhaps predictably, the much-hyped Shell annual general meeting turned out to be a bit of a damp squib, a rather tedious and long drawn out affair at which the various resolutions on the environment and human rights were overwhelmingly defeated by proxy. The pressure groups did not come away empty-handed, however, and they can genuinely claim after yesterday's events that tactics of this sort work. Eved Pir co-ordinated that three out of five of its demands have already been answered while the company is well on the way to addressing a fourth. Notwithstanding what Shell directors say, it seems unlikely this would have happened in the absence of campaigning shareholders.

The affair has raised a number of broader corporate governance issues. In the City, and to some extent at Shell, it became seen as an issue of principle about the board's right to manage. It is not the place of shareholders, the argument goes, to dictate to the board its policy on human rights and the environment, just as it is not the place of shareholders to dictate to the board on

employment policy or the finer details of investment strategy. These are matters for management. In the event of poor or cavalier management, markets can properly exercise control either by clearing them out, or by depriving them of capital.

In the real world, however, nobody, even in the City, really believes in applying this rigid separation of ownership and management rights. Big institutional shareholders often become actively involved in management issues, if only by encouraging executives, sometimes through non-executives, to do certain things and discouraging them from others. The argument used by campaigners in this instance that there is a very good business case for applying the highest environmental and human rights standards is only a more broad-brush version of the same thing.

In truth, it is actually a thoroughly good thing for managements to be held to account for their actions over a wide range of different issues and practices. The chief executive of a large multinational possesses a form of absolute power which goes way beyond that of a government minister or official. Most of them exercise it responsibly, but it is these very highly paid people to whom the usually legitimate concerns of campaigning pressure groups, or their increasingly effective attempts to hijack the ordinary rubber-stamping business of company meetings. Managements are unaccountable enough already. Attempts to make

them more so, even by sometimes misguided and ill-informed pressure groups, are only to be applauded.

Short memories in the City

It is little wonder the outside world believes the City is an unreal, through-the-looking-glass sort of place. In the past three days the Square Mile has furnished its critics with two more stunning examples of the yawning chasm that exists between its air conditioned offices and the real world.

First, it emerged that senior executives at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell are poised to pick up breathtaking bonuses after a year in which the bank dropped a mighty £450m thanks to the Peter Young disaster. Even DMG admitted, with impressive understatement, that a rumoured £7.5m bonanza heading the way of chief executive Michael Dobson might give it "preseasonal difficulties".

Then Nicola Horlick, whose petulance on being suspended from Morgan Grenfell's investment arm in January left observers open-mouthed, walked into another high profile job at SocGen's Loodoo asset management start-up. As they dodged the toys flying out of her pram, conservative types in the City muttered that she had made herself unemployable. Unreliable, unbecoming, they spluttered. Memories are short.

C&W in no rush to lower Hongkong Telecom stake

Michael Harrison

Dick Brown, chief executive of Cable & Wireless, indicated yesterday that the company might be prepared to see its stake in Hongkong Telecom fall below 50 per cent as part of a deal with China when it takes control of the colony next month.

However, he said C&W remained in "the driving seat" in negotiations with the Chinese leadership, it was not facing a deadline to secure an agreement by 30 June and any deal which reduced its 59 per cent shareholding would have to be at the market price or a premium if it involved a change of control.

Mr Brown also confirmed C&W was talking to three potential partners about a transatlantic tie-up in the US and it had held talks with USWest about its 50 per cent stake in the mobile

telephone business One2One.

Asked whether C&W's talks with the Chinese were based on it retaining 51 per cent ownership, Mr Brown said: "I don't put so much stock on that. What we are looking at is how you enhance shareholder value."

Although C&W was in the driving seat it wanted to agree a partnership with the Chinese and was talking to a broad range of interested parties in China. "We are under no self-imposed time restraint. We don't feel compelled to be held to any point on a clock or a calendar," he said.

Mr Brown was speaking as C&W announced a 12 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £1.4bn last year on record sales of £7bn. Hongkong Telecom contributed £1bn in operating profits on sales of £2.7bn. The profit in-

crease came despite a sharp rise in C&W's share of One2One's losses from £63m to £141m.

The growth in sales last year came mainly from Hong Kong, North America and the Caribbean while operating profits from the UK, where C&W's main business is Mercury, jumped from £183m to £317m.

Mr Brown made it clear that, Hong Kong aside, his priority was to conclude a deal in the US. He confirmed that C&W was talking to Global One, the transatlantic alliance between the US long-distance carrier Sprint, Deutsche Telekom and France Telecom, as well as AT&T and Nynex. But he refused to be drawn on which one was the front runner to do a partnership deal.

The talks with USWest were also thought to have

USWest's UK cable operator, Telewest, joining Cable & Wireless Communications.

CWC, the £4.5bn venture between Mercury and three UK cable companies, Nynex, Bell CableMedia and Videotron, is about to start rolling out a multi-million pound branding campaign to attract more cable television and telephony customers.

Mr Brown said he would be opposed to any deal between British Telecom and the Government which set BT free from the prohibition on broadcasting television. He said the cable industry "is still a bit fragile and can get snuffed out".

Mr Brown also said C&W would be prepared to see the Government give up its golden share in the company which pro-



Driving seat: Dick Brown has no deadline for agreement

tests it from foreign takeover. The Government is under pressure to abandon its golden shares in BT and C&W in return for US regulatory approval

Home-owners 'pay too much'

Nic Cicatti
Personal Finance Editor

Millions of mortgage borrowers will pay £73m more in interest payments than they should over the next 25 years because lenders charge them for repayments they have already made, according to figures issued yesterday by Yorkshire Bank.

Almost 1 million people who took out a mortgage in 1996 may end up paying £13m more than they should over the same 25-year period, the bank said.

For an average £51,000 repayment loan on which interest is charged each year, a homeowner would overpay more than £13,500 in interest costs over 25 years. The overpayments are because most lenders offer mortgages on which interest is calculated in arrears each year. No account is taken of payments credited in the previous 12 months.

Chris Herbert, head of marketing and customer services at Yorkshire Bank, said: "Lenders which follow this practice alone are effectively receiving a 12-month interest-free loan each year from their customers and are really only acting in their own self-interest."

Yorkshire Bank, which is owned by National Australia Bank, has calculated the cost of a £50,000 repayment mortgage, where other lenders charge annual interest while it deducts it on a daily basis. Whereas a standard repayment mortgage would take 25 years to pay off the loan, the same level of payments with Yorkshire Bank would see the loan met in just over 20 years.

A Halifax spokeswoman said: "We explain to our borrowers exactly how interest is charged on the loans they take out and do not believe we are hiding anything from them."

Three ex-Nomura bosses held

Three former senior executives of Nomura Securities were arrested yesterday by Japanese authorities over alleged pay-offs to racketeers in an escalating scandal at Japan's and the world's biggest brokerage.

Agents of the Tokyo Public Prosecutors Office also searched the trio's homes for evidence that Nomura paid ¥49.7m (£252,000) to Ryuichi Koike, a "sakaiya" or gangster who blackmails companies by threatening to disrupt shareholders' meetings.

Two of the executives arrested were Shunpei Matsuki and Nobutaka Fujikura. Both

were managing directors and, in terms of seniority, were only three steps down from the president's office.

The two men resigned in March, followed weeks later by Sakamaki – Nomura's president – and 14 other top executives. The mass resignation was unprecedented and was a sign of how seriously Nomura was taking this scandal.

The other executive arrested yesterday was Osamu Fujita, a former director in the general affairs division.

Agents from the Prosecutors Office also searched the home of Hideo Sakamaki, former

president of Nomura Securities. Mr Sakamaki was not arrested. Japan's Minister of Finance Hiroshi Mitsuoka said the arrest of the three executives was "highly regrettable".

Mr Mitsuoka said his ministry would handle the Nomura incident "in a strict manner" when it received a report from the Securities and Exchange Surveillance Commission (SESC). He added that he would monitor the investigation "with great interest".

The arrests came a day after the SESC asked prosecutors to file charges against Nomura and the three executives for il-

legally compensating Mr Koike for his trading losses.

By charging Nomura as well as the three men, the commission indicated it did not believe Nomura's claim that the executives acted on their own.

The executives face up to a year in prison and fines of up to ¥1m. Nomura could be fined up to ¥100m.

Nomura has also been hit by the decision to discontinue trading with it by several publicly owned Japanese banks and investment houses. "We obviously can't go on trading with a company that has a criminal charge against it," one said.

Warning hits Merrydown

Cathy Newman

Ferocious competition in the alcoholic market yesterday led to Merrydown, better known for its ciders, issuing a shock profits warning, sending its shares down from 95p to 75p – one of its lowest levels in 25 years.

The company said that it would soon announce a programme of cost-cutting that would almost certainly involve redundancies.

Paul Millman, managing director, blamed a drop in sales of the company's Two Dogs alcoholic lemonade on a surge in the number of alcohol brands flooding on to the market.

Mr Millman said that profits for the financial year to the end of March would be "significantly below" analysts' expectations. He would not be drawn on the

scale of the job losses among its 150 staff.

The company is to "change the nature of the business", and refocus on its core cider products, which, according to Mr Millman, have been performing well over the last few years.

Sales of Two Dogs during the January to March quarter were "disappointing".

Mr Millman said that distribution of Two Dogs had now been safeguarded by a contract with Scottish Courage. Scottish Courage will, with immediate effect, take on the marketing and distribution of the brand.

"When we started Two Dogs in 1995, there was just us and Hooper's Hooch [owned by Bass]."

"Now there are some 90 brands. We don't have a massive sales force: we're a small company and Bass is a big one." Mr Millman added that the deal with Scottish Courage – the UK's largest brewer – would give the company improved marketing muscle. He also believed that "some rationalisation" in the crowded alcohol sector would be likely.

Last July, Merrydown was riding on the crest of the alcohol wave, reporting sales up 58 per cent at £37.1m, and pre-tax profits of £2.03m for the year to the end of March. Analysts yesterday cut profits estimates for 1996/97 to around £850,000.

IN BRIEF

Fed tipped to hold interest rates

Hopes were raised that the Federal Reserve may hold back from raising rates at its policy-setting meeting next Tuesday following news of a 0.6 per cent drop in the US Producer Price Index in April. It was the largest one-month drop in the PPI in almost four years. Even when the volatile food and energy sectors were taken out of the data, the so-called "core rate" was still down by 0.1 per cent. The news, which was far better than had been forecast, fuelled an early rally in bonds and stocks. "It's a very favourable number to the bonds and bonds are gatekeepers to the stocks," said Larry Wachtel of Prudential Securities. Opinion was sharply divided, however, on the likely next step of the Fed, which raised US rates by a quarter point at its last meeting.

Whisky union positive on job losses

GMB Scotland, the largest whisky union, is confident that any job losses arising from the £23bn merger of Guinness and Grand Metropolitan can be achieved through voluntary redundancy and natural wastage. Harry Donaldson, the union's chief negotiator, emerged from talks with Guinness' United Distillers yesterday saying he was also confident that the recently signed employee security deal would be honoured and run until April 1999. The union is seeking talks with Grand Metropolitan, whose IDV spirits division employs nearly 400 people in Scotland, mostly in a bottling plant in Dumbarton and four whisky distilleries.

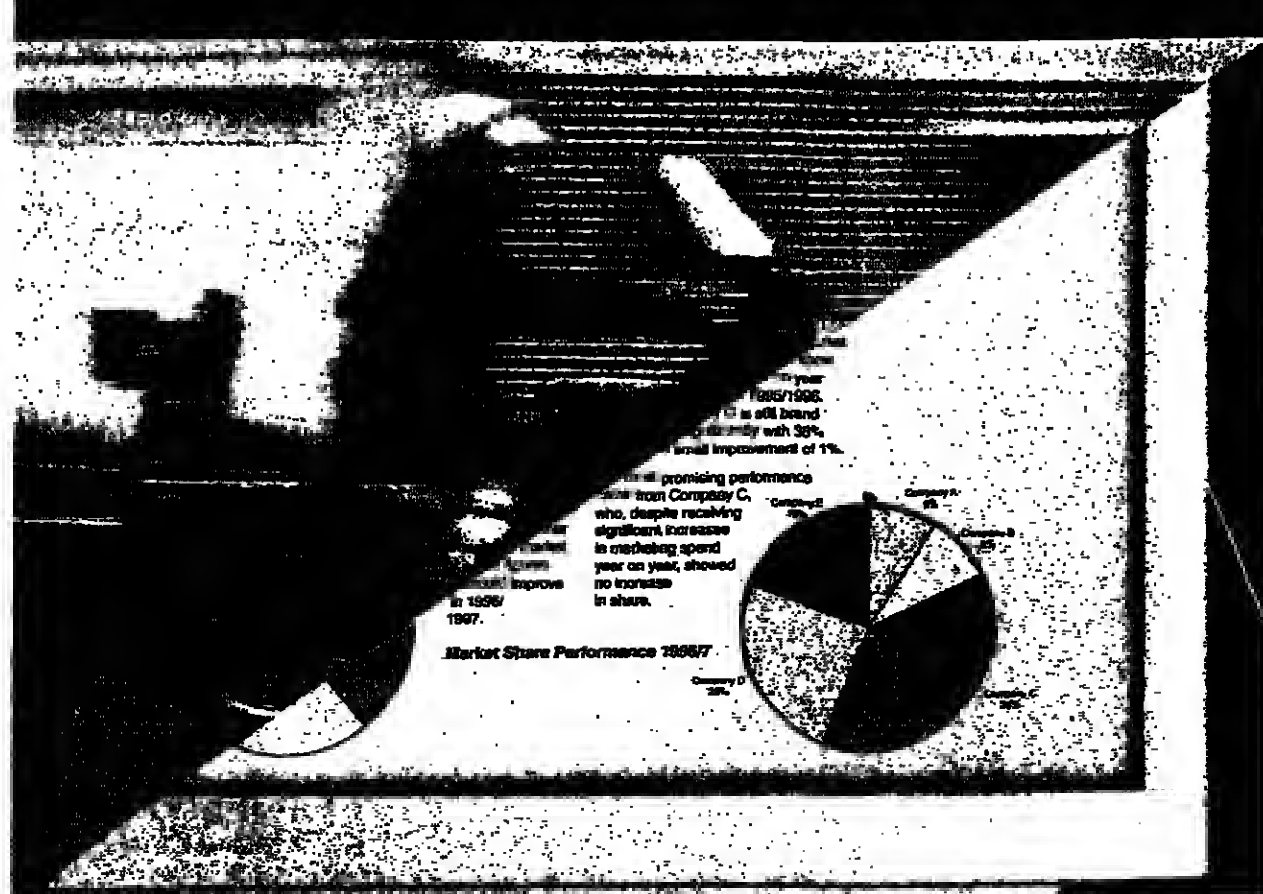
Non-executive directors' fees rise by 20%

Non-executive directors have seen their fees increase between 15 and 20 per cent in the past two years, with the average totals ranging from £14,500 a year for companies with turnover of between £26m and £100m to £26,200 for companies with turnover of more than £2bn, according to a survey for the Institute of Chartered Accountants' business board and PRO-NED, the organisation for the promotion of non-executives. Company chairmen, who overwhelmingly felt that the role of non-executives had become more demanding, expected fees to continue to rise at the rate of about 10 per cent a year.

VarietyPerkins signs £18m engine deal

LucasVariety's VarietyPerkins subsidiary has signed a joint venture agreement with Tianjin Engine Works to manufacture more than 50,000 engines a year in China, with an initial investment of £18m. A plant in Tianjin will build Perkins' most widely sold engine ranges – the four- and six-litre Phaser and 1000 Series. In the long term, capacity is scheduled to grow to 120,000 engines a year.

Motorbike despatch ISDN despatched



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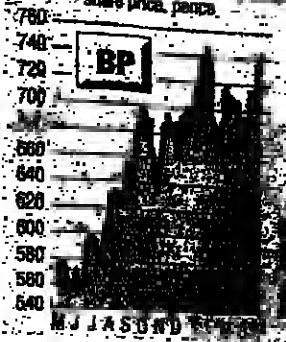
* Connection fee £199, quarterly line rental £133.75, minimum service period: 24 months (£105 per annum inclusive call allowance in first and second years).

Taking Stock

Kuwaitis set to reduce stake in British Petroleum

Data Bank	
FTSE 100	4686.9 -4.1
FTSE 250	4529.3 -3.7
FTSE 350	2269.7 -1.9
SEAQ VOLUME	843.4m shares, 57,941 bargains
Gifts Index	97.51 +0.28

Share spotlight



A huge placing of British Petroleum shares is believed to be under way.

Stories flowed around the stock market that the Kuwait Investment Office was hoping to sell all, or part, of its remaining shares, a 9.3 per cent stake.

Fidelity, the big US investment house with 6.6 per cent of BP, was named as a possible buyer of some of the KIO interest.

The Kuwaitis once had around 30 per cent but were forced to reduce their holding. If they are planning a further sale they will benefit from a BP price near its all-time high.

The shares edged ahead 2p to 744.5p, so the KIO could expect to collect at least 720p a share, pricing its interest at around £3.8bn.

Other oils were mainly firm with Cairn Energy enjoying the benefit of an encouraging Bangladesh presentation, up

13p to 554p, and Enterprise Oil ahead 11p to 667.5p.

The rest of the market had, by recent standards, an uncertain session. Footsie was on a roller coaster, climbing above 4,700 points again. But for the second day running it was unable to cling to such an exalted level and by the close was down to 4,686.9.

The modest decline ended a remarkable 11-session winning streak which lifted the index more than 300.

Supporting shares were again downcast with the FTSE 250 index off 3.7.

Uncertainty created by the Queen's Speech took the shine from blue chips. The market, which has chased takeover candidates, was unsettled by proposed legislation to make life more difficult for hostile bidders and plans for higher mobile telephone charges.

Some of the long-running takeover candidates lost some



MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

of their enthusiasm and mobile phone groups were misrouted with Vodafone off 6.5p to 275p and Orange 6.5p to 217.

BT, despite conditional EU approval for its MCI deal, was lowered 3p to 449.5p because of its mobile connection. Cable & Wireless was another to feel the telephone pinch, falling 14p to 498.5p.

Abbey National ended 22.5p lower at 935p as the rumoured bid failed to materialise, producing the usual fold-you-so-chorus in certain quarters. Alliance & Leicester recovered 11p to 613p and National Westminster Bank improved 12p to 810.5p.

Safeway rose 23.5p to 354.5p

as results came in higher than expected and Airtronic climbed 30p to 974.5p on its 28.8 per cent jump in summer bookings.

British Airways flew 31p higher to 742.5p as a five-year international airline deal offered promising support that its proposed alliance with American Airlines will get the regulatory all-clear.

De La Rue, the security printer, fell 26.5p to 501p in response to the still-to-be-confirmed placing by Merrill Lynch and haulier Taylor Woodrow dropped 7p to 204p after a late trade of 1.35 million shares at 200.5p was printed.

T&N, the vehicles compo-

nents group, gained 8.5p to 137p after a merger plan by the German Kolbenschmidt group where it has a 24 per cent stake.

Medeva, the health group, rose 14.5p to 286p with ABN Amro Hoare Govett and Merrill Lynch said to be positive.

Building materials had an awkward time as Caradon warned of difficult European and US markets, clipping its shares 8p to 226.5p. On Tuesday Roskel unsettled sentiment with a profits warning.

Rosen Furniture, the retailer, helped its shares 12.5p to 82.5p by firing a day - Friday next week - to announce its year's figures.

Marylebone, the alpaca and cider group, fell a sobering 15p to 75.5p as poor sales of its two dogs brand prompted a profit warning.

Deutsche, the computer group, fell 49.5p to 160p after a profit warning and more losses at On Demand Inform-

mation left the shares 6p lower at 17.5p.

Pan Andean Resources firmed to 34.5p after severing its links with BHP. The Australian group, in Bolivia. It is looking for another partner; fears of a rights issue can be discounted.

John D Wood, the estate agent, gained 20p to 140p on the takeover approach and an offer for Circle Communications lifted the shares 7.5p to 75p.

Clothing group SR Gent put on 4.5p to 59.5p as the bid talks, first disclosed in October, presumably drifted on.

TJ Hughes, the retail department store chain, improved 3p to 86p.

Charterhouse Tilney increased its profits estimate and said the shares should "materially outperform".

Tusk Resources firmed 0.25p to 6p. It has raised £4.75m by placing 95 million shares at 5p a share through Dublin stockbroker Davy. The cash will go towards developing the group's Nigerian offshore exploration interests and reducing debt. Once a high-flying Colombian explorer, Tusk's shares briefly touched 100p. Then when its oil fund was uncommercial the price collapsed to 1p. It was "reborn" in October 1996 when a Houston group acquired control, moving operations to Nigeria.

Network Technology held at 219p. Merrill Lynch is looking for profits to climb £2.4m to £5.7m this year and reach £8.3m next.

Versatile, the coloured glass group, made a firm debut, closing at 4p against a 3p placing.

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 50 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, including exceptional items. Other details: Ex rights = Ex-dividend a six and a half pence. Ex rights = Ex-dividend a six and a half pence. Ex rights = Ex-dividend a six and a half pence. Ex rights = Ex-dividend a six and a half pence.

The Independent Index

The index shows you a selection of share prices by phone from London Stock Exchange. Simply dial 0891 233 333, and when prompted to do so, enter the 4-digit code printed next to each share. To access the latest financial reports dial 0891 233 333 followed by one of the two-digit codes below.

Anyone with a home-line telephone can use this service. For a detailed description of the Independent Index, including its portfolio facility, phone 0891 233 333. For assistance, call our helpline 071 873 4378 (9.00am - 5.00pm).

Market leaders: Top 20 volumes

Stock	Volume	Stock	Volume	Stock	Volume	Stock	Volume
BT	200000	Virgin	100000	ASDA	80000	BT	200000
BT	200000	Virgin	100000	ASDA	80000	BT	200000
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FTSE 100 index hour

Photograph: Allsport

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For those of us who rode the jet stream of Ali's progress, sights of him in full flow are bound to bring on sadness

Shortly after Muhammad Ali caused the biggest sensation in boxing history by knocking out George Foreman in Zaire to regain the world heavyweight championship, he invited two British sportswriters into his hangar at Nisele on the banks of the Congo.

The clamour of momentous achievement had yet to descend from Kinshasa and the only other people present were Ali's bodyguard, a Chicago policeman Pat Patterson, his aunt Coretta Clay and the other cook Lanna Shabazz, who was fixing a meal for him.

Foreman had landed some heavy punches, but apart from a small bruise beneath the right eye, Ali was unmarked. Dressed in black slacks and matching black shirt, he was sitting

back in an easy chair with his legs stretched across a low table. That alarming decision to fight Foreman off the ropes brought to a glorious conclusion, he said. "There was swingin' away and all the time I was talkin' to him sayin' 'Hit harder, George. That the best you got? Harder, sucker, swing harder. You the champion and you gettin' nowhere'. Then pop! I'd stick him with a jab."

Partly because it was unusual to hear Ali swear (he first checked to ensure that the ladies were out of earshot), the thing I most remember Ali saying was: "I done fucked up a lot of minds."

Sadly, the probable long-term effects of that and subsequent contests (as well as risks taken in spar-

ring to be confident of withstanding the heaviest punishment) has long since occupied our attention.

This week, I went along to an exhibition of photographs by Ali's long-time friend Howard Bingham, coinciding with tomorrow's London release of *When We Were Kings*, a vivid, Oscar-winning account of the most dramatic event sport has ever known.

For those of us who rode the jet stream of Ali's stupendous progress, sights of him in full flow, talking up a storm, soaring from one fight of fantasy to the next, are bound to bring on sadness.

Motor senses numbed by the onset of Parkinson's Syndrome make him tread carefully now, the measured steps symptomatic of a con-

dition surely caused by too many head punches. People say that with-in his confines Ali remains happy, intellectually sound.

"When something catches Ali's interest, the response is immediate," Bingham said. "For a moment sud-

dently he rolls back the years. I think he enjoys life, I really do."

That view is shared by Benn Wetz, who has spent three months on a documentary about Ali as he is now that will be shown next week on German television. Close to Ali for 30 years, he came across encouraging examples of his awareness.

"Howard is absolutely right," he said. "If something interests Ali he becomes, however briefly, almost his old self again."

A short while ago in Chicago, he grabbed my arm and edged towards a framed picture of him boxing. He'd identified the other guy, "Jürgen Blin," he said. Now that wasn't one of Ali's big fights and it took place in Zurich in 1971, so his memory appears to be intact.

More recently, Wetz was asked if Ali could handle a short tribute at a ceremony to mark the 50th anniversary of Jackie Robinson's breakthrough as the first black player in Major League baseball. "I didn't want to embarrass Ali, but when I mentioned Robinson's name that old smile came to his face. 'Is he dead?' he asked. It would have been enough for him to say 'Jackie, you were great' but, astonishingly, he went further, adding: 'The greatest, the greatest of all times, greater than I ever was'."

Ali's performance at an event put on for children in Pensacola, Florida, by the light-heavyweight champion, Roy Jones, surprised Wetz even more. "Roy persuaded Ali to get involved and, astonishingly, he got up

on his toes and started shadow boxing. Lanny Merchant of HBO was there and shared my amazement. 'Did you see that?' he said. 'For a few moments the light was back in his eyes. I don't think Ali is sad and he gets a lot of love from his wife, Lannie. The great thing, of course, is that as sport's supreme hero he still commands a great deal of attention'."

There has recently been a suggestion that Ali may benefit from a new treatment. I don't know about this but there is no sense in doubting the probability that his plight is linked directly to boxing.

When We Were Kings is a smashing film, but it only proves that Zaire was indeed the time to start worrying about him.

KEN JONES

Nottinghamshire make themselves at home

Cricket

HENRY BLOFIELD
reports from Old Trafford
Lancashire 125
Nottinghamshire 128-4

An exceedingly green pitch, plenty of movement off the seam, poor batting and excellent catch making made for a day of high entertainment. A total of 14 wickets fell and one hopes that a flurry of pitch inspectors will not descend on Old Trafford, for there was nothing wrong with the surface.

In these days of anaemic covered pitches it made an agreeable change to see such a lively surface. It showed how ill-prepared modern batsmen are when they have to contend

with these conditions and it was all a powerful argument for a return to uncovered pitches.

Let us hope that Peter Maron, the Old Trafford groundsman, can come up with something similar for the third Test and that the first two, at Edgbaston and Lord's, are not all that different. The Australian batsmen would be scuffling about all over the place.

Overnight rain held up the start until 12.15pm and then, after Nottinghamshire had decided to field, Kevin Evans made the most of it. At a brisk fast-medium, he found bounce and moved the ball sharply away from the right-hander. Strangely, he only seemed to swing the ball when changing his line to bowl to left-handers. He took 6 for 40, the best figures of his career.

Jason Gallian set the tone for the Lancashire innings when he followed a lifter from Evans in the day's first over and Graham Archer held the first of four fine catches at second slip, low, two-handed to his right. In Evans' second over Mike Atherton played back to another which lifted and left the bat. He instinctively followed it and was caught at first slip. Atherton shuffled off in that apparently unconcerned way of his, but surely he must be worried by his lack of runs so far this year.

Neil Fairbrother was third out trying to hit Evans off the front foot over midwicket and skying a catch to wide mid-on. It became 14 for 4 when Graham Lloyd bounced at another which bounced and left him. Immediately after lunch, Mike Watkinson hooked

to fine leg and Ian Austin steered the next ball to third slip.

Archer now pounced three in succession at second slip and Lancashire were 52 for 9 before John Crawley, who reached a glowing fifty, and Peter Martin played some excellent strokes, adding 73 for the last wicket. The stroke of the day was a pull for six over midwicket by Crawley off Chris Tolley.

Then it was Nottinghamshire's turn and Wasim Akram and Glen Chapple began by taking three wickets when their score was 13. After tea, Noel Gie was bowled playing no stroke at Wasim but then Paul Johnson, who reached a doughty fifty, and Usman Afsar fought bravely through to the close, adding 91 in 31 overs on a pitch which had eased under the sun.

Battering by bowlers

DAVID LLEWELLYN
reports from Canterbury
Gloucestershire 279
Kent 67-2

It is bad enough having to deal with the likes of Waqar Younis and Steve Watkins in their more regular role of strike bowlers, as a sticky session at the end of a fascinating day bore witness, but when you also have to contend with them as run-getters then it all becomes a bit much.

The Kent attack made have thought they were in for an easy time of it having reduced Gloucestershire to 108 for 6, with the Pakistani Test fast bowler making his way out to join Robert Croft. But it took them almost an hour and a half to part the pair. Croft, the first to go for a stubbornly correct 39.

Waqar followed a couple of overs later a tantalising three runs short of his maiden Championship half-century, one of McCague's six victims in the innings. His 61-ball contribution contained some memorable shots, one in particular when he dropped on to one knee before hauling Paul Strang for six.

Then Darren Thomas, again regarded as more useful with ball than bat, came in to play a delightful innings, crammed with genuine strokes. He was

cruelly out for 46, top edging an attempted hook.

He and Steve Watkins had added 58 for the ninth wicket, a partnership bettered only by that between Croft and Waqar, who put on 63 for the seventh.

And still the batting bowlers had not done with Kent. Watkins lashed out while Dean Cosker remained patiently on nought to bring up a second bonus point.

The pacy and fairly ferocious McCague accounted for him, inducing a mis-drive to present Strang, running in from mid-on, with a simple catch. That gave him a return of 6 for 75 - his second five-wicket haul in successive Championship matches.

Watkins, on 39, was within sight of his best first-class score when he fell, but he had done enough and did not want to open the bowling exhausted. It did not take him long to get in among the wickets. While Kent's openers, David Fulton and Matthew Walker, struggled to come to terms with Waqar they forgot how good Watkins could be.

Walker's careless hook skied the ball to Croft coming in from long leg. Fulton, whose first at 64, also came under the hammer, top-edged a hook to Thomas to end an unhappy outing and it was left to Alan Wells, with a cluster of authoritative boundaries to start making inroads on the Gloucestershire total.

Donald still potent

JON CULLEY
reports from Edgbaston
Yorkshire 233
Warwickshire 64-4

Warwickshire went some way yesterday to endorsing the judgement of those bookmakers who made them the pre-season favourites for the Britannia Assurance title - but then saw their gains devalued as Darren Gough did his best to upstage Allan Donald.

Yorkshire's effervescent England bowler bent his back in the evening sunshine and was handsomely rewarded. His inswingers proved too much for Nick Knight and David Hemp, who were dismissed in the space of four deliveries in his first two overs and, when Chris Silverwood accounted for Andy Moles, Warwickshire were already in a sorry state.

Gough then stifled Warwickshire's attempts to construct a recovery by adding the wicket of Dominic Ostler with the fourth low dismissal of the evening. The home side closed at 64, 4, accompanied with which Yorkshire's 233 looked a respectable total. Gough claimed 3 for 12 from his nine-over spell.

That rather took the shine off what had until then been an encouraging day for Warwickshire, hungry again for silverware after failing last year to add to the six trophies won between 1993 and 1995. Much of their optimism about this season is invested in two bowlers, Donald and Ashley Giles - the two, in fact, who inflicted most of the damage on Yorkshire yesterday, claiming four wickets each.

Donald, refreshed after spending last year behind the scenes at Edgbaston, is shaping like a man with another formidable season ahead of him, and Warwickshire have every reason to feel they have one of the Championship's trump cards at their disposal.

In his 31st year, Donald looks the supreme athlete still, the grace and rhythm of his bowling one of the current game's finest sights, unless you happen to be batting against him. Warwickshire know they have to make the most of his availability. Next season he will be playing in England - but for South Africa, of course, in 1999, in the World Cup.

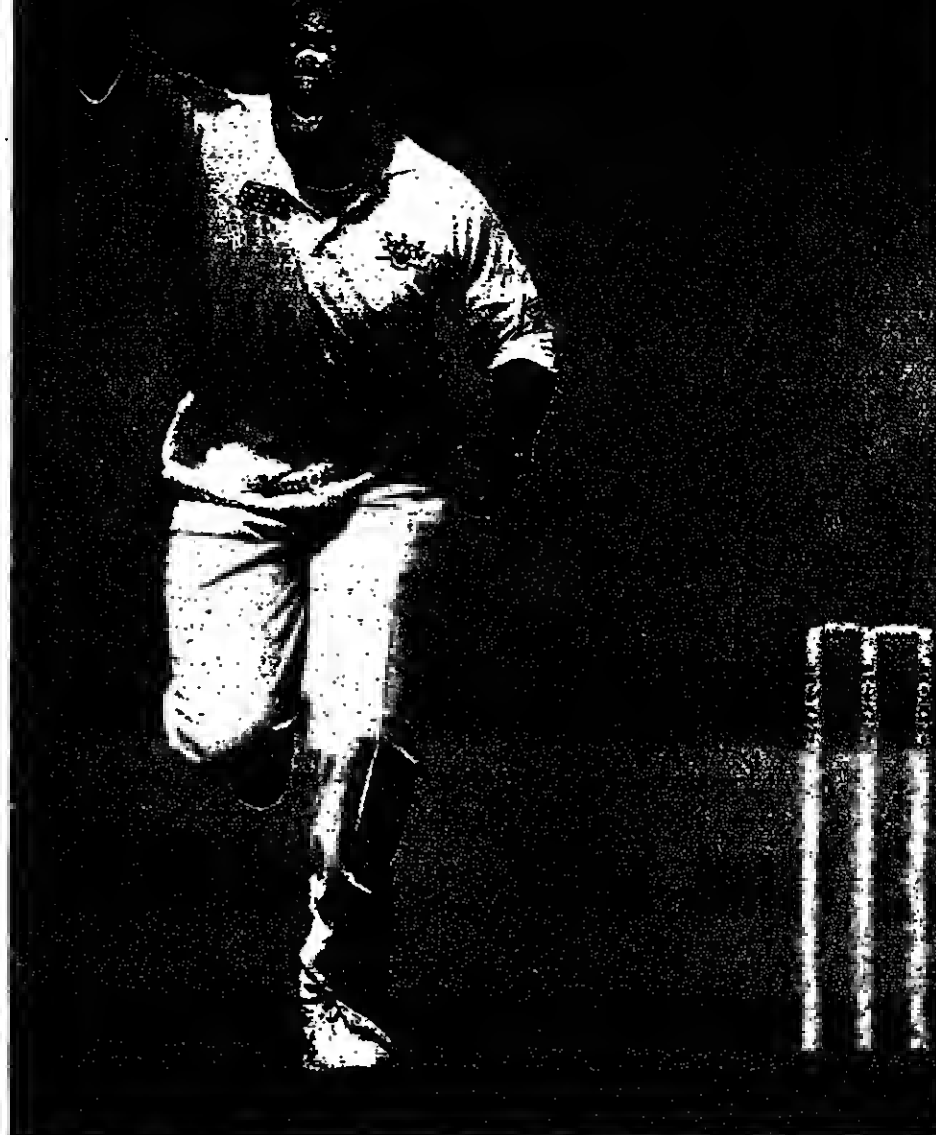
Only Michael Vaughan, who hit six boundaries in his 56, and Darren Lehmann gave Yorkshire's innings real substance, the Australian working hard for more than three hours to make 62 before shouldering arms to Dougie Brown, who deserved his success.

encouraging day for Warwickshire, hungry again for silverware after failing last year to add to the six trophies won between 1993 and 1995. Much of their optimism about this season is invested in two bowlers, Donald and Ashley Giles - the two, in fact, who inflicted most of the damage on Yorkshire yesterday, claiming four wickets each.

Donald, refreshed after spending last year behind the scenes at Edgbaston, is shaping like a man with another formidable season ahead of him, and Warwickshire have every reason to feel they have one of the Championship's trump cards at their disposal.

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Gloucestershire's David 'Syd' Lawrence celebrates having Alec Stewart, of Surrey, caught behind at The Oval yesterday. Photograph: Peter Jay

Kent's chance to make amends

Kent yesterday welcomed the chance to avenge their controversial Benson and Hedges Cup defeat of three years ago after being paired with Warwickshire in the quarter-final draw at Lord's.

The two sides are scheduled to meet at Canterbury on 27 May in a fixture which will rekindle memories of Warwickshire's dramatic bowl-out victory over Kent at Edgbaston in 1994. After the first two days of the contest were lost to heavy rain,

the sides were forced into Edgbaston's indoor centre to effect a result. Kent later protested to the Test and County Cricket Board about Warwickshire's failure to protect the pitch.

The other key match in the draw will take place at Chelmsford, with Essex and Surrey poised to repeat their thrilling NatWest Trophy semi-final of last season at The Oval. Essex triumphed then by four wickets. Leicestershire, the county champions, host Somerset at

Grace Road, while highly fancied Yorkshire tackle Northamptonshire, last year's beaten finalists, at Headingley to complete the line-up.

Benson and Hedges Cup Quarter-final draw (to be played 27 May): Leicestershire v Somerset; Yorkshire v Northamptonshire; Kent v Warwickshire; Essex v Surrey.

■ Pakistan have lifted their two-year Test ban on Aamir Sohail after he apologised for making allegations of match-fixing and betting. The ban has been replaced by a fine of 50,000 rupees (£775).

Monty goes to work on greens

Golf

ANDY FARRELL
reports from Hanbury Manor

Afraid that he is on the road to nowhere, Colin Montgomerie has taken the A10 to Ware. The Scot heads the field in the Alamo English Open at Hanbury Manor today, along with Jose Maria Olazabal, who is making his first appearance in Britain since the 1995 Open at St Andrews.

While 10 years ago The Oxfordshire, venue for last week's Benson and Hedges, was farmland, Hanbury Manor was a convent for the Faithful Companions of Jesus. The estate provides a historic setting which can be traced back to the Domesday Book.

Monty's performance on the greens of late has been less than saintly, but his day of doom came last Sunday when he shot a last round 81 in the company of the Ryder Cup captain, Seve Ballesteros. At the second hole, Montgomerie took five putts. The Spaniard said nothing until Montgomerie holed from 40 feet at the next. "Ah, four less than the last time," Seve remarked.

"I'm not playing on the first morning at Valderrama we'll know why," reflected Montgomerie. On Tuesday he spent seven hours practising at The Buckinghamshire club with his coach, Denis Pugh. Last night he headed to the putting green to resume a practice routine from his days at Houston Baptist College of holing a hundred two-footers before dinner.

"It's over the last few that the pressure tells. It's like being in the nervous nineties in cricket. If you miss at 98 or 99, you feel rotten about it. I will probably do this every day until the US Open," Montgomerie said.

This is an important part of the year for the European No. 1. He is lagging behind Olazabal, Bernhard Langer and Ian Woosnam on the money list and faces the Volvo PGA Championship at Wentworth next week and the US Open at Congressional next month. "I feel the PGA is a tournament I should have won by now and I owe it to myself to try and win the US Open," he said.

"But we are nearly in June and I've only had three top-10s. That's no use. The problem has been my chipping and putting. I've been failing on both counts. That puts pressure on me to hit my irons close and that produces bad shots. I've improved for 10 years as a pro and I can't afford to let it slip now."

In contrast to Montgomerie, Tiger Woods has had no problem on the greens, or anywhere else on the course, and the 21-year-old is eager to continue his global domination in the Byron Nelson Classic which starts today in Irving, Texas.

Woods will play his first competitive round since his record-breaking US Masters victory at Augusta a month ago and if his practice round on Tuesday is anything to go by, the rest of the field had better be prepared to play for second place again. Woods shot an unofficial 64 and announced he was raring to go after his four-week break.

"I'm hitting the ball well, I'm surprised. I'm hitting it so well, Woods said. "I expect to win this week. I expect to win every tournament I play."

Woods is also looking forward to next week's Colonial tournament in Fort Worth, where he will come face to face with Fuzzy Zoeller. The 1979 Masters champion touched off a firestorm of controversy in Augusta when he said he hoped Woods wouldn't serve "fried chicken and collard greens" at next year's Masters champions dinner.

"I'd like to ask him what exactly he meant," Woods said. "I want to have a heart to heart talk with him and find out what he was thinking."

Happy start for Lampard

Equestrianism

GENEVIEVE MURPHY
reports from Windsor

Di Lampard won the first show jumping contest of this year's Royal Windsor Horse Show when she rode Jenny Willmet's chestnut stallion, Audacity, to victory in yesterday's Land Rover Grade A Jumping.

Lampard acquired the ride as the result of an "out of the blue" telephone call from the owner last year. "The first time I jumped him I loved him," she said of the horse who had been the victor of two other contests with her before winning by the comfortable margin of 4.75sec.

Admittedly, some of Lampard's rivals were out for a quiet school at the start of this five-day meeting. She was, nevertheless, delighted with this proof that the stallion's education was progressing on the right lines when she defeated Geoff Luckett on Clover Child and Tim Stockdale on Halida.

The brothers Damian and Nick Charles won the later Petan Family Pair Relay. They had looked in danger of defeat at the hands of Michael Whitaker and his nephew Robert (son of John) until Virtual Village Silver Cinder incurred a fourth-second penalty with Robert when he had the last fence down.

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CRICKET SCOREBOARD

Britannia Assurance County Championship <i>(First day of four)</i>	Leicestershire v Flintshire A R K Pearson not out 0 L Maddy not out 0 Total (for 0, 1 overs) 2 To Bat: V J Smith, A Habb, S J Smith, J J Walters, M C Johnson, P A Morris, D J Hughes, A D Mully, M B Harrison. Bowling: G J Conner and G Sharp.	Nottinghamshire v Glamorgan CANTERSBURG: Kent (4pts) are 27 for 2 in reply to a first-innings total of 273 by Glamorgan who lost. LANCASHIRE v First Innings R J Hughes 24, A Smith 14, M W Moon, M N Bowen, P J Harris. Bowling: Wainwright 3-4-28; Smith 3-24-0; Galt 1-0-9-0. Warwickshire v Yorkshire Edgbaston: Warwickshire (4pts) are 64 for 4 in reply to a first-innings total of 233 by Yorkshire (1). Today: 12.0.	Warwickshire v Yorkshire Edgbaston: Warwickshire (4pts) are 64 for 4 in reply to a first-innings total of 233 by Yorkshire (1). Today: 12.0.	Warwickshire v Yorkshire Edgbaston: Warwickshire (4pts) are 64 for 4 in reply to a first-innings total of 233 by Yorkshire (1). Today: 12.0.
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sport

Bates explains the Gullit effect



Ruud Gullit will be presented with a new contract this summer — regardless of Chelsea's result in Saturday's FA Cup final against Middlesbrough.

Gullit, who adapted his playing contract and extended it by a year when he succeeded Glenn Hoddle as manager last summer, will be offered another deal as soon as he returns from a post-final club tour and personal holiday.

"We have mentioned it but neither of us wants to talk about it until after the final," Ken Bates, the Chelsea chairman, said yesterday. "He's probably going on holiday then, but we will talk to him when he comes back."

Although Gullit has been linked with a number of clubs, including his former team, Milan, and his boyhood favourites, Feyenoord, Chelsea are confident the Dutchman will stay.

Bates cited three reasons for this. "One: who can afford him? Two: where will he live? He and his girlfriend are very happy here, he likes the style of London. Three: what can he do elsewhere that he can't do at Chelsea? In Italy the presidents interfere, he wouldn't last long under that. People talk about Milan, but look at the state of their pitch. I've walked on it. It's terrible."

"We never doubted Ruud would be the man to take over

FA CUP FINAL COUNTDOWN

Glenn Moore finds Chelsea's chairman delighted with his manager's first year

when Glenn Hoddle left," Bates added. "We had been talking to him for a year and got to know the guy and he is something different. He was an influence behind the scenes — even under Hoddle."

"Most player-managers fail because, instead of working 10 hours a week, they are now working 60 — they can't cope. A football club today is not like it was 20 years ago. It's a big business. So we [Bates and Colin Hutchinson, Chelsea's long-serving managing director] decided to let him concentrate on his playing and coaching. We organised others to look after the administration and deal with the press and players' contracts."

"That arrangement started with Hoddle — getting him in was the first stage. He made a great number of changes at all levels and he bought in Mark Hughes and Gullit. He made some mistakes, bought some bad players, but that was the platform. When he went to the England job, Ruud took it on."

"They have different styles, Glenn was into reflexology, alternative medicine, a dietician.

Gullit is into fitness, he bought in Ade Mafe, and a different style of coaching. He bombed out the dietician, reflexologist and masseur."

"Gullit said to me: 'The players rebelled against the dietician, telling them what they should eat. If I say 'you must eat this', they won't eat at the training ground, they will go elsewhere and get it. You have to get them to realise the only person who can look after themselves is themselves. If they don't realise that, they won't be in the team.'"

Bates added: "Some make the transition from player to manager easily, others find it a problem. John Hollins found it hard. As a player, he was one of the ones that took the mic out of the manager behind his back. Now his team-mates were doing it to him. Ruud has not had a problem like that."

"He's done two important things. He's shown no favours in team selection. When Dennis Wise was playing crap, he dropped him. The message was: 'Even if Dennis is captain, he will not be picked if he is not playing well.'"

"Then, when Gullit himself was injured, Craig Burley took his place. He played well and, when Gullit was fit, instead of putting himself back in the team, he said: 'Craig has been playing well, so he stays in.' That sent out the message that no player had the right to walk into the team. If he was not guaranteed a place, no one was."



Ken Bates (main picture) on Ruud Gullit (inset): 'We never doubted Ruud would be the man to take over when Glenn left. He is something different'

Photographs: Allsport

England slip down world rankings

England have slipped one place to 13th in the latest list of international rankings released yesterday by Fifa, world football's governing body.

The fall is mainly the result of defeat in their World Cup qualifier against Italy at Wembley in February, with the Italians climbing four places to sixth.

Brazil, World Cup winners in 1994, still head the list, followed by the European champions, Germany, and Denmark, who have risen from sixth place at the end of last year.

Scotland remain in 29th position while the Republic of Ireland are down eight places to 44th. Northern Ireland climb one to 64 and Wales slip three places to 83.

Australia, who are now managed by the former England coach, Terry Venables, have managed one of the most dramatic improvements, rising from 50th place last year to 34th.

FIFA WORLD RANKINGS (Position at end of 1996 in brackets): 1 Brazil (1), 2 Germany (2), 3 Denmark (6), 4 France (5), 5 Spain (8), 6 Italy (10), 7 Netherlands (9), 8 Czech Republic (15), 9 Romania (16), 10 Russia (17), 11 Colombia (18), 12 Mexico (13), 13 England (12), 14 Bulgaria (15), 15 USA (14), 16 Norway (14), 17 Portugal (13), 18 Sweden (11), 19 South Africa (22), 20 Argentina (21), 21 Paraguay (20), 22 Tunisia (23), 23 South Korea (24), 24 Iran (25), 25 United States (26), 26 Chile (27), 27 Costa Rica (28), 28 Croatia (29), 29 Scotland (30), 30 Saudi Arabia (31), 31 Belgium (32), 32 Australia (34), 33 Republic of Ireland (35), 34 Wales (36), 35 North Korea (37), 36 Greece (38), 37 China (39), 38 Vietnam (40), 39 Thailand (41), 40 Japan (42), 41 South Korea (43), 42 Korea Republic (44), 43 China (45), 44 Republic of Ireland (44), 45 North Korea (46), 46 Vietnam (47), 47 Thailand (48), 48 China (49), 49 South Korea (50), 50 China (51), 51 North Korea (52), 52 Vietnam (53), 53 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Ken Bates tells Glenn Moore
about his main man, page 29

England blow as Pallister is ruled out

Football
ANDREW MARTIN

Glenn H. Judd learned yesterday that Manchester United have withdrawn Gary Pallister from England's summer schedule. The central defender will undergo surgery tomorrow after results of a scan revealed he will need a cartilage removed.

The 31-year-old will now miss the friendly with South Africa at Old Trafford on 24 May, the World Cup qualifier in Poland a week later and the four-nation tournament in

France in June. The 22-year-old Liverpool defender Dominic Matteo is likely to take Pallister's place.

Pallister's withdrawal comes less than 24 hours after the Liverpool manager, Roy Evans, said he wants to pull Steve McManaman and Robbie Fowler out of England's forthcoming games as both players also require surgery.

Another United player who will not be competing for his country this summer is Denis Irwin, who has pulled out of the Republic of Ireland squad for next Wednesday's World Cup

qualifier against Liechtenstein at Lansdowne Road. The 31-year-old defender is troubled by a hernia injury.

Better news for Roy Keane, who will be fit for the start of next season following precautionary surgery against a hernia yesterday.

Controversy continues to dog Alex Ferguson, whose description of the Premier League as a "riddlywinks league" has incurred the ire of its chief executive, Peter Leaver. The United manager made the damning assessment after the kick-off of Coventry's vital last match of the season at Tottenham was delayed. He was also critical of the League last month when it refused to alleviate United's congested fixture list.

Leaver said: "It seems that Manchester United feel they should be given consideration which other clubs may not get, but I have to be even-handed."

Blackburn Rovers' next foreign acquisition could be the Borussia Dortmund striker Stéphane Chapuisat. Blackburn yesterday offered £4.2m for the Swiss international, who is likely to be sold by the European Cup finalists.

Slaven Bilic arrived at Everton yesterday following a £4.5m transfer from West Ham, making him football's most expensive defender. The 28-year-old Croat has signed a five-year contract.

T. Bradford City manager, Chris Kamara, is attempting to lure Peter Beardsley from Newcastle United, with the added bait of a coaching role for the former England international.

Sol Campbell yesterday committed his future to Tottenham when he signed a new five-year contract, ending speculation that the gifted defender may leave White Hart Lane.

Britannia still rules for Boro's boy from Brazil

SIMON TURNBULL

Alex Ferguson would have loved it, just loved it. Down at the Riverside Stadium, where the Manchester United manager celebrated the clinching of the Premiership last season, Juninho was the talk of the town.

For the third time since Middlesbrough's relegation to the Nationwide League on Sunday, Juninho made it clear that he is not prepared to risk losing a place in Brazil's World Cup squad by spending next season as a second-class football citizen in England.

Spain appears to be the most likely destination for the man who will be wearing the Middlesbrough No 10 shirt against Chelsea in the FA Cup final on Saturday, though he dismissed reports that he is to fly out for talks with Atletico Madrid on

Sunday morning as simply not true.

But Ferguson, one of the many admirers the 24-year-old from São Paulo has won in his 18 months here, will have been encouraged by Juninho's declared interest in staying in the Premiership. Asked if he would be interested in joining another English club, he replied: "Yeah! I have adapted to English football. I know how to play here now."

"I like the way the English play. It's a very fast game, attack all the time. The chances come faster for you. I think it has made me a better player. I am a more complete player now. I have not decided about my future yet. I have to talk with Bryan Robson [Middlesbrough's manager] and with Steve Gibson [the club chairman]. But I have to think of my career. It is most important for me to be in the Brazil squad. And to be in the Brazil squad you have to play in good teams."



Scottie Pippen rises to the occasion to help the Chicago Bulls beat the Atlanta Hawks 107-92 on Tuesday to cruise through to the Eastern Conference finals. The defending NBA champions won the series 4-1. Photograph: AP

Draper exhausts ailing champion

Tennis

JOHN ROBERTS
reports from Rome

Scott Draper could scarcely believe what he had achieved after trading shots with Thomas Muster, the master of clay courts, for nearly three hours in the semifinals of more than 100F on the Centre Court at the Italian Open yesterday.

"I beat a player who's probably recognised as one of the best players in the world of all time," the 22-year-old Australian said after his 7-6, 5-7, 7-5 victory. "The scary part is that I probably beat him physically and mentally."

Muster was hardly in a position to argue. The exhausted 29-year-old defending champion cancelled his media interview and returned to his hotel to rest on the instructions of the tournament doctor. Having had a stomach upset before the start of the match, Muster ended it in a state of severe dehydration. The organisers of the Italian championship were surprised by a chain of results that has seen them lose the top three seeds in the opening two rounds. Muster, the No 3, having fallen in the second round 24 hours after the first-round eliminations of Pete Sampras and Michael Chang.

Mats Wilander, the Swedish, lost to the world No 1, and the Czech Karel Novacek have been banned for three months by the International Tennis Federation after withdrawing appeals against positive drug tests taken in 1995. Both players insist cocaine found in the tests was knowingly consumed, but agree that the urine samples are theirs and will take no further action.

Richard Krajicek, the fifth seed, was another second-round victim, the Wimbledon champion losing to Germany's Max Guler. 7-6, 7-6.

Draper is one of the most talented young players on the ATP Tour, a prospect who, during his formative years, dealt with comparisons to the great Rod Laver by pointing out that flattered though he was, the only similarity he could think of was that they were both left-handers.

Muster is also a left-hander, which made yesterday's contest all the more fascinating. Even before his condition deteriorated, he was experiencing difficulty dealing with Draper's brilliant shot-making, particularly his backhand down the line.

Times have changed for Muster, whose two titles this year have been won on the concrete courts of Dubai and Key Biscayne, Florida. His record on clay-court matches over the previous two years was 115-5; yesterday's defeat puts him at 4-5 for the season so far.

"It's funny what a week can do," Draper mused. "If you'd seen me play last week you'd have said: 'Who is this guy? I'm not even close to being satisfied with my consistency. I've got to work on the mental side of my game. Some days I don't know how I'm going to play. I've just got to keep working on believing in myself and my game, and playing smart.'"

Muster managed to stave off seven break points in the final set, only to double-fault on the eighth for 5-6. Draper served out the match for the loss of only one point, raising his arms in triumph after Muster netted a backhand service return on the second match point.

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Banks' 'ridiculous' England plan

MATT TENCH

After the crossed fingers, the cross foreigners. No sooner had Tony Banks, the new Sports Minister, enraged Westminster traditionalists with his unusual stance when taking the oath of allegiance, than he risked an even more extreme reaction from the footballing variety with his prescription for a successful England team. Take a handful of Italians, a couple of Frenchmen, the odd Dutchman - and maybe even a few Englishmen.

Within hours of his much-criticised Commons performance, the maverick Minister demonstrated that his talent for controversy was as developed as ever when he suggested to the man from the Press Association that the rules be changed so that overseas footballers playing for English clubs become eligible to play for Glenn Hoddle's national side.

This immediately conjured the mouth-watering, if far-fetched, image of Alan Shear-

er forming a dynamic World Cup partnership with Gianfranco Zola, with the two being supported by the likes of Eric Cantona and Dennis Bergkamp. Banks insisted, however, that he was not simply indulging in fantasy international football.

"We ought to think about, if you play in this country for one of the league teams, you can play for the country as well," he said. "In other words the right to play is not one of birth but one of residence. Think about it. Freedom of movement within the European Union, able to vote, let's start thinking the unthinkable. If people are playing over here and want to play for England and Scotland, why not play?"

For good measure, Banks added that what he was really in favour of was a combined United Kingdom team, comprising the best of the English, Scottish and Northern Irish teams - as well, presumably, as the best foreigners.

Mr Banks' extraordinary suggestions drew a guarded re-

sponse from the Football Association. Graham Kelly, its chief executive, said: "The FA's reaction to such comments would be entirely and wholly sceptical. I'm sure the four British associations have similar views, and indeed I think I would say the same for UEFA and FIFA."

Cesare Maldini, the coach to the Italian national side, was more forthright. Describing the idea as "ridiculous", he said: "If you follow through what this man is saying, then Paul Ince ought to play for Italy."

"This minister has probably only been in his post for a short period of time and doesn't know anything about sport yet. He might be a fan, but obviously he hasn't been briefed about the football world. On certain subjects it's better to think before you speak."

Banks admitted his ideas were not Government policy, but added: "Let's discuss it. Why don't we talk about it? We're in Europe, we're involved. Tony Blair said to me: 'Get in there

and live it up', and I'm going to do precisely that. These are things worth discussing, it's no good saying it's rubbish, we can't do it. Why shouldn't we discuss it? My role here is to be a bit challenging and controversial and to act as a catalyst."

Banks' capacity to be "a bit challenging" has already seen him removed by Downing Street from his weekly slot on a radio phone-in, on the grounds that it was too wide-ranging for a Sports Minister.

His latest outburst, clearly within his brief, hardly received a ringing endorsement from Downing Street yesterday. "Picking the England side is a matter for Glenn Hoddle. Tony Banks is certainly living things up," a spokesman said.

And if the Prime Minister is entertaining any second thoughts about his new Sports Minister, the man himself would certainly understand. "I know one thing," Banks said as he concluded his latest controversial interview. "If I'd been Tony Blair I wouldn't have appointed me."

Fear of cigarette withdrawal symptoms

Sports politics

Sports bodies in this country reacted swiftly to yesterday's Queen's Speech which made clear the Government wants an end to cigarette advertising.

The Sports Minister, Tony Banks, said: "We are totally opposed to advertising of tobacco products. We would like to de-

tach sport from tobacco sponsorship. I've never believed sport and smoking go together."

Richard Little, corporate affairs manager of the England and Wales Cricket Board, said: "The problem is we do not know what the legislation is going to involve. It may not prevent sponsors putting money into the sport. Benson and Hedges have been a tremendous sponsor

over more than 20 years but if legislation dictates that B&H are unable to sponsor cricket any more we will have no option but to find somebody else."

Sir Rodney Walker, chairman of the Rugby Football League and the Sports Council, said: "We want to see whether existing contracts will be allowed to be completed. This will have a major effect and we hope the Gov-

ernment might consider some kind of safety net support for sports who lose sponsorship."

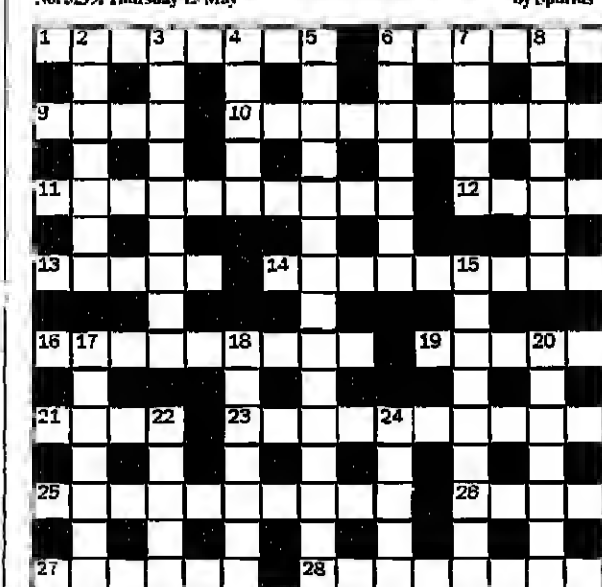
A spokesman for the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association, whose two main events are tobacco sponsored, said: "Tobacco sponsorship in sport does not encourage people to smoke. We feel it encourages existing smokers to change brands."

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3299, Thursday 15 May

By Spinruts

Wednesday's solution



BEAUTIFUL
COAST
PEACE
ADDITION
RECONNAISSANCE
DANCE
UNION
FORTUNATE
NOTED
FIRE
SAND
BASE
STORIES
ROMANS

ACROSS

- 1 Occasional problems with PC's radio (8)
- 6 Cook's undergarment is of uncommonly large size (6)
- 9 Is pensioner following TV programme? (4)
- 10 Head for Missouri, entering quickly by railway (10)
- 11 Lower Austrian costume (10)
- 12 Footplate men stopping short of railway town (4)
- 13 Court official admitting woman to old city (5)
- 14 New instances not ceasing to appear (9)
- 16 Dreamer quick to defend saint of doubtful authenticity (11)
- 19 Try getting police to back exercise (5)

DOWN

- 2 Some do Pushkin's poetical work (4)
- 23 Partner going into Frenchman's pad in town (4-1-5)
- 25 Injured goalie a friend of Constance? (10)
- 26 Lily demands a drink (4)
- 27 Sick notice at this point (6)
- 28 Particulars given in press, etc., as amended (8)
- 3 Fearfulness shown by old women featured in the papers (7)
- 4 Exhibit on offer (9)
- 5 Difficulty with hospital department initially (5)
- Passing ball to central defender - former highway worker (3-7)
- 17 A parish priest gaining Archbishop's praise (7)
- 18 Overall marked by sauce (7)
- 20 Endeavour to obtain employment (7)
- 22 City investment? (5)
- 24 Land, for instance, anti-discrimination group will occupy (5)

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